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Slaves of Christ: Caesar's Household and the Early Christians

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Slaves of Christ: Caesar's Household and the Early Christians

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Slaves of Christ: Caesar's Household and the Early Christians

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This project examines the relationship between early Jesus groups and the Roman emperors' slaves and former slaves (the so-called *familia Caesaris*) from the first to the third century. The apostle Paul, a first-century Jew, once referred to "saints in Caesar's household" in his letter to the Philippians (Phil 4:22). Traditionally it was thought Paul wrote this from Rome, and that Christians continued to serve Caesar in Rome over the next several centuries, thus raising Christianity to socio-political prominence as *the* religion of the Empire. I challenge this traditional narrative by analyzing literature, inscriptions, and archaeological evidence from across the Mediterranean. Although, as I show, the imperial slaves Paul references were in Asia Minor (modern Turkey)–not Rome as traditionally thought–Paul's reference was nonetheless crucial for Christianity in antiquity. In the second and third century Christians from Asia Minor, Gaul, North Africa and Italy capitalized upon Paul's famous reference–especially the idea of Christians serving Caesar in Rome–to construct a new social memory and cultural geography across the Mediterranean. I use insights from cultural geography to illuminate how Christian writers coopted Christians in Caesar's household to create a place for their communities in the Mediterranean's cultural landscape. Yet, what was lost from memory was how those imperial slaves in Rome who were Christians by the third century defied traditional Christian ideals by participating in the worship of the divine emperor. I uncover this reality by interpreting imperial slave and freedperson inscriptions in the context of new archaeological and anthropological frameworks. Christian communities, I conclude, fostered a sense of 'worldwide Christianity' by claiming as Christian those imperial

slaves and freedpersons who had, paradoxically, accepted a conflicting, imperial cosmology. Against traditional explanations, therefore, this project thus presents new ways of understanding Christianity's ostensible rise in the Empire while shedding important new light on the social context of Paul's early reference to Caesar's household (*familia Caesaris*).

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INTRODUCTION

"*Thus even a Christian, if he possessed the confidence of the emperor, could become a man of importance in the empire*." ---Adolf von Harnack[1]

When the Alexandrian Jew Philo travelled to Rome in 40 CE on an embassy to the emperor Caligula, he found progress at court difficult. His diplomacy was hampered at every turn because Caligula and his slaves were always joking around; to make matters worse, says Philo, most of Caligula's slaves were Egyptian. Philo despised them. He calls Caligula's slaves "wicked men," "crocodiles and asps." Worse yet, says Philo, the ringleader of the brood was Helicon, a "damnable and abominable slave" who was attached to Caligula's hip day and night–playing ball with Caligula, exercising with him, bathing with him, eating with him, and when the emperor went to bed, Helicon was there, too. The whole time Helicon was apparently at the emperor's ear defaming the Jews. Philo's other rival ambassadors, the Alexandrians, knew this full well, says Philo. So they bribed Helicon with both money and future honors, which they hinted, they would soon bestow on him when Caligula came to Alexandria. All told, Philo's experience with the emperor's slaves was a disaster. It spelled failure for his mission and trouble for the Alexandrian Jews.[2]

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[1] Harnack 1908: 2.49

[2] See Philo, *Leg*. 162-196 and Josephus, *Ant*. 18.8; 19.5; 20.5.

A few decades later, another Jew from the eastern Mediterranean came to Rome on a different mission. He was an apostle of Christ and he converted and/or allied with already-converted slaves and freedmen of the Roman emperor Nero.[3] He writes back to his community in Philippi: "All the saints greet you, especially those who belong to Caesar's household (Phil 4:22)." The apostle Paul's experience with the emperor's slaves and freedmen was a hit. It spelled success at the palace court and future triumph for Christianity. Or, so the traditional story goes. And though traditional, this version of the tale continues to draw fresh proponents.

A recent commentary on Paul's letter to the Philippians, published in 2011 by a popular academic press, summarizes the story like this: "Among other things, this greeting [Phil 4:22b] makes evident that the gospel had reached even into the halls of power, even if it had converted some of its lower echelon. This process of course would eventually culminate in the conversion of Constantine himself in about A.D. 300 or so."[4] This author's explanation of the 'process' is not an anomaly. For over a century and half many biblical scholars and church historians have looked for and to Christians in Caesar's household in the time of Paul and in the following centuries to explain the social, economic, or political rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire.

This project argues that such traditional, but untested, explanations have no basis in historical or social reality. The emperor's slaves and freedpersons played a pivotal role in the development of early Christianity, but not in the way scholars have often imagined.

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[3] Reicke 1970: 285; Bruce 1989: 40-41.
[4] Witherington 2011: 283.

Rather than markers of Christianity's prominence by virtue of their early 'conversion,' the imperial slaves Paul noted in passing were coopted by later Christians who sought to create a place for themselves in the empire's cultural landscape. Early Christian communities appropriated 'Caesar's household' to foster a sense of worldwide Christianity. To show this I analyze literary and archaeological evidence from Asia Minor, Italy, Gaul, and North Africa in an anthropological framework.

In the more specific contours, I show that the imperial slaves Paul references were actually in Asia Minor–not Rome–and already knew the Christ worshippers in Philippi. Yet, Paul's reference to Caesar's household became a crucial vehicle for later Christians at the turn of the third century. As they began to understand themselves as a "new race" and a global entity they capitalized upon Paul's famous reference to construct a history and geography across the Mediterranean. Early Christian writers, for example, used Paul's earlier reference (Phil 4:22) and stories of his martyrdom to fashion a cultural history in which Christian imperial slaves were consistently and increasingly in the heart of imperial power. Meanwhile, Christian communities in several parts of the Mediterranean envisioned Christian imperial slaves living in Rome, especially in the imperial palace, as momentous symbols for Christian cultural space. Underneath it all, there most likely were some Christians among the emperors' slaves and freedpersons by the third century. But based on their lives and ritual world we can gather that their Christian*ness* would have defied traditional definitions of 'Christian.' This project thus presents new ways of understanding Christianity's ostensible rise in the Empire and a new history for Christians in the emperors' household.

THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY: 'CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD' AND A TRIUMPHALIST NARRATIVE

For many scholars from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century Paul's reference in Phil 4:22 meant that there were Christians in the household and at the court of the emperors' beginning in the first century. Many of these earlier scholars thought that when Paul wrote Philippians he was imprisoned in Rome, as per Acts 28, and he either converted, or aligned with already-converted, imperial slaves and freedmen. Because many thought Paul wrote Philippians from Rome they also thought he wrote it later than the letter to the Romans, which clearly indicates that Paul had not yet been to Rome (Rom 15:22-29). Consequently, scholars mined the Roman letter and the increasingly available epigraphic catalogues (e.g. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*), to attach names to Paul's greetings from "Caesar's household" in Phil 4:22. So the households of Aristobulus (Rom 16:10) and Narcissus (Rom 16:11)–names which appear in Roman history and epigraphy as powerful imperial freedmen–also came to be connected fictively to Phil 4:22.[5] Some have even suggested that because Paul mentions his relative Herodion (Rom 16:11) between the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus, Paul's own family background may have been among imperial freedmen, which would explain his personal connections with them.[6] So Paul's reference to "Caesar's Household" meant Christianity had already 'penetrated' some of the highest levels of Roman society.[7]

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[5] Lightfoot 1953 [1868]: 173, 175; Harnack 1908: 2.45; Bruce 1989 [1983]: 158; Bockmuehl 1998: 270.
[6] Bockmuehl 1998: 270; Hengel 1991: 4-17.
[7] Fee 1995: 114. This connection with the imperial family, even from the "early days," allowed Christians to survive repression and persecution (Stark 1996: 46).

And so the traditional narrative of Christianity's 'triumph' continued; the narrative suggested that Christians continued to serve Caesar in Rome over the next several centuries. Further evidence to suggest this image was drawn from an array of early Christian literature–largely with connections to Rome–that references, or seems to reference, Christian imperial slaves or freedmen. This includes the Apostolic Fathers, namely *1 Clement* (late-first or early-second century CE); polemical writings of Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130-202 CE) and those attributed to 'Hippolytus of Rome' (c. 170-236 CE); apologetic literature of Tertullian of Carthage (c. 160-220 CE); various apostolic acts such as the *Acts of Paul* and the *Acts of Peter*; martyrdom accounts including the *Martyrdom of Paul* and the *Acts of Justin and Companions*; and, finally, historiographical references from Cyprian of Carthage (c.200-258 CE) and Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-340 CE). From this literature, scholars constructed an impressive gallery of Christian slaves and freedmen from the first to the third century. The literature was merely culled, however. The names and people who appeared to be Christian imperial slaves or freedmen were extracted and then either added to a list or stockpiled as evidence for the growing presence of Christians in "Caesar's household." Nonetheless, this literary ensemble provided additional evidence, continuing immediately after Paul, for numerous Christian imperial slaves and freedmen in Rome–some of whom were rich, powerful, or influential.

Added to this literature are several inscriptions from Rome that name slaves or freedmen of the emperors and bear ostensible Christian symbols and phrases. These inscriptions, which appear to date to the late-second and early-third century, first came to

light in the newly excavated 'Christian' catacombs of Rome in the mid-nineteenth century. As a result, these imperial slave and freedperson inscriptions were then catalogued, in some cases re-identified, as invariably Christian material, and a number were widely-circulated in periodicals across the European continent. (Other similar inscriptions have been discovered or re-categorized over the years). Because it was taken for granted that these were Christian inscriptions, scholars could also claim that the imperial slave or freedman mentioned on the stone had been a Christian. As we will see in Chapter 3, the most important example was the sarcophagus of Marcus Aurelius Prosenes, who was a freedman of the emperor Caracalla in the early-third century. He was powerful, being Caracalla's household manager, but he was also a Christian–or so many have claimed. Taken together, then, these inscriptions seem to suggest a significant group of influential Christian imperial slaves and freedmen in the Severan period. By the middle of the third century, the story goes, there were enough Christian imperial slaves and freedmen, and they were prominent enough, that the emperors Decius (249-51 CE) and then Valerian (253-59 CE) initiated an empire-wide persecution. This included a purge of Christian "*Caesariani*."[8] The emperors failed, thus marking the beginning of the end of Greco-Roman paganism.[9]

The early and enduring version of this triumphalist narrative came from Adolf von Harnack's magisterial *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten*

[8] Cyprian, *Ep*. 80.1. Valerian's house was a "church of God" (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl*. 7.19.4). Finn 1987: 34.
[9] Frend 1984: 328.

drei Jahrhunderten (1902).[10] In the first volume Harnack dealt with the external and internal conditions that allowed for the expansion of Christianity. Then in last part of the second volume (Book 4) Harnack shifted from a focus on 'mission' to the historical courses of expansion in either geographical, institutional, or social terms.[11] And here Harnack unveiled "an astonishingly learned" primary-source tour of all the passages that mention the numerical growth of the early Christians.[12] The tour included Christianity's spread among the upper classes followed immediately by a survey of its spread "At Court" then in the military, among women, and some discussion of church buildings.[13] For Harnack, "At Court" meant principally the slaves and freedmen of the palace.

Harnack began his review of Christianity at court with Paul's reference in Phil 4:22, ran through supposedly late-first to late-second century literary references to Christians in "Caesar's household" (*Acts of Paul*, *Acts of Peter*, *1 Clement*, Irenaeus' *Haeresis*, the *Martyrdom of Justin and Companions*, Hippolytus' *Haeresis*, Tertullian's *Apology* and *ad Scapulam*), included epigraphic evidence such as the inscription for Caracalla's "Christian high chamberlain (Marcus Aurelius) Prosenes," and ended by reiterating Eusebius declaration that the emperor Valerian's (253-260 CE) "court was full

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[10] Originally published in 1902 as *Die Mission un Ausbreitung des Christentum in den Ersten Drei Jahrhunderten*.

[11] White 1985/86: 102.

[12] Bremmer 2010: 45.

[13] Harnack had prepped his survey of Christianity's spread at court, and among the imperial household and retinue, by first reviewing the spread of Christianity "Among the Cultured Classes (Aristocratic and Official)." The esteemed list of converts includes the proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7-12), the city-treasurer of Corinth, Erastus (Rom 16:23), the Roman noblewoman and member of the imperial family, Pomponia Graecina (Tacitus, *Ann*. 13:32), and cousins of the emperor Vespasian, Titus Flavius Clemens (*cos*. 52 CE) and his wife Domitilla, the supposed patrons of Clement the author of *1 Clement*.

of pious people; it was a veritable church of God."[14] Harnack's treatment of this material has been so dominant that even in a 2010 book on the *Rise of Christianity Through the Eyes of Gibbon, Harnack and Rodney Stark*, one scholar could claim that Harnack's "survey is still valid in most cases, except regarding the aristocracy and the church buildings."[15]

Despite the long-term stability of Harnack's reconstruction of Christianity at court, he had concretized what was already in the air. In his book *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170* (1893), for example, William Ramsay explained how Christianity became a religion for the Empire because, in large part, Christians at court "spread" their religion through proselytizing.[16] Ramsay described the "effect produced by the Christian religion on the Roman world," by asserting "it spread at first among the educated more rapidly than among the uneducated" and "nowhere had it a stronger hold (as [Theodor] Mommsen observes) than in the household and at the court of the emperors."[17] The citation of Mommsen refers to his influential article on the "Religionsfrevel" in Roman law (1890) in which he pointed out that the Roman government was tolerant towards Christians, that there was no definite law against Christians, and added that "the [emperor's] court was always a center of

[14] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.10.
[15] Bremmer 2010: 45.
[16] Ramsay 1893: 192-93.
[17] Ramsay 1893: 57.

Christianization."[18] It should be noted here that in this circle of scholars Mommsen and Harnack were good friends, and Mommsen knew well Harnack's arguments about the spread of Christianity at court since he had, before his death in 1903, provided written and oral feedback for the first edition of Harnack's *Die Mission und Ausbreitung*.[19]

But both Harnack and Ramsay owed much, and paid tribute, to their predecessor J.B. Lightfoot whose impact on this traditional narrative cannot be underestimated. By the second half of the nineteenth century Lightfoot had already swelled the number of Christians at court by connecting Phil 4:22 with several names from Romans 16. For example, Lightfoot identified the Narcissus mentioned in Rom 16:11 with the emperor Claudius' powerful freedman Tiberius Claudius Narcissus.[20] This Narcissus is reputed to have been the richest person in early Empire, other than the emperor himself.[21] Harnack followed suit, only he reinforced the identification by citing epigraphic evidence that mentioned the freedman "Narcissus."[22] Lightfoot was also responsible for linking Phil 4:22 with the second generation of Christians attested in the Apostolic Fathers. In his tortuous explanation, in which he made ready use of epigraphic catalogues from Rome,

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[18] Mommsen 1890: 419, n. 2, "der Hof von jeher Mittelpunkt der Christianisirung [sic]." Mommsen's article, which was responding to Karl Johannes Neumann's *Der römische Staat und die allgemeine Kirche bis auf Diocletian* (1890), in turn influenced both Ernest G. Hardy's *Christianity and the Roman Government*: *A Study in Imperial Administration* (1894) and William Ramsay's *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170* (1893). For the available descriptions of the imperial court during the nineteenth century see Friedländer 1979: 1.30-97, originally published in 1862-71 as *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit von August bis zum Ausgang der Antonine*.

[19] For bibliography on their relationship see Bremmer 2010: 29, n.123.

[20] Lightfoot 1953 [1868]: 175; Juvenal, *Sat*. 14, 329; Tacitus, *Ann*. 13.1; Dio Cassius, *Hist. rom*. 60.34

[21] Duncan-Jones 1982 [1974]: 343.

[22] Harnack 1908: 2.45, n.2. He borrowed this epigraphic identification from his colleague Otto Hirschfeld (Hirschfeld 1905: 471-74). Incidentally, Hirschfeld would go on to author one of the first full-scale studies of imperial administration that incorporated imperial slaves and freedmen, including Ti. Claudius Narcissus.

Lightfoot suggested that Clement, known as the late-first century bishop of Rome and the supposed author of *1 Clement*, was a freedman of Flavia Domitilla and Titus Flavius Clemens, cousins of the emperor Vespasian and Domitian. Lightfoot then proposed that Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito, the couriers of *1 Clement* (1 Clement 65) were "retainers of the Caesars" and imperial freedmen who were likely included in the Caesar's household Paul mentions in Phil 4:22.[23] Harnack followed here as well.[24] Some of the prosopographic interconnections between Paul's writings and later Christian literature had been circulating since the late-second century. But Lightfoot's identification of Narcissus, Clement of Rome, Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito as imperial freedmen who were related to Paul's "Caesar's household" would remain indubitable into the twenty-first century.[25]

Most works during the late-nineteenth century, and roughly over the next seventy years, emphasized that Christians were predominantly taken from the lower classes of society.[26] These earlier historians were led to posit the proletarian constituency of earliest Christianity in large part to explain the 'revolutionary' character of the new religion, the underlying theoretical postulate being that these kinds of movements arise from the

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[23] Lightfoot 1890: vol. 2, part 1, 189, n.9; 1890: vol.1, part 1, 27, 29.
[24] Harnack 1905: 2.45.
[25] Narcissus in Romans 16: 11. See Lightfoot 1953 [1868]: 173, 175; Harnack 1908: 2.45-6; Lake 1919 [1912]: 4; Richardson 1970 [1953]: 37; Finn 1987: 33; Kyrtatas 1987: 79-82; Bruce 1989 [1983]: 158; Jeffers 1991: 31, 102; Bockmuehl 1998: 270; Finn 2000: 299.
[26] With only a few notably exceptions such as Pomponia Graecina, Titus Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla. The fact that slaves were a constant presence in Christian communities from the beginning was an important reason for this characterization of early Christianity's social composition. See 1 Cor 1:26-7, Origen, *Cels*. 3.44, Minucius Felix, *Oct*. 8.4.

downtrodden mass of the lowest social classes.[27] In this way of thinking, Harnack, Ramsay, and Lightfoot showed the important exceptions in the earliest days of Christianity.[28]

By identifying Christians in the imperial household who were rather illustrious (e.g. Narcissus, Clement, or Prosenes) Harnack, Ramsay, and Lightfoot also showed how the palace court at Rome was one of the first fertile grounds for Christianity's climb to power. Listen to Lightfoot: "In the palace of the Caesars, when [Paul] arrived in Rome he found among the members of the imperial household, whether slaves or freedmen, some who had already embraced the new faith and eagerly welcomed his coming."[29] This "progress of Christianity," Lightfoot suggested, "*raised* the church in Rome to a position of prominence," initiated the "long struggle, which raged for several centuries, and ended in establishing the Gospel on the ruins of the Roman Empire."[30] The church, Lightfoot explains, was not generally recruited from the higher classes of society, but through the emperor's slaves and dependents, "[Christianity] advanced silently step by step, till at length it laid its hands on the princes of the imperial house."[31] Paul evidently laid the groundwork, and from the time of Clement in the late-first century, "the imperial household was henceforward a chief centre of Christianity in the metropolis."[32]

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[27] Gager 1979: 179.
[28] Brief summary in Stark 1996: 29-33.
[29] Lightfoot 1953 [1868]: 19.
[30] Lightfoot 1953 [1868]: 2, my emphasis.
[31] Lightfoot 1890: 1.1, 29-30.
[32] Lightfoot 1890: 1.1, 62.

Imperial Slaves and Freedmen: "The Leaven of Christianity"

Just as important as the historical configuration Lightfoot and Harnack developed was the understanding of religion they imprinted on this material. As Lightfoot articulated, it was the tendency of "religious movements to work their way upwards from beneath."[33] So Lightfoot explained the role of imperial slaves and freedmen in the 'rise' of Christianity, and when Harnack turned to the subject he supplied even more primary-source references as evidence.

The idea of the 'rise' of Christianity thus refers not only to the numerical growth of Christians, and not only to the geographic 'spread' of a movement, but also to Christianity's increased power. This power, the reasoning goes, came from proselytizing and converting more prominent people.[34] "It is easy to imagine," quoting Lightfoot once more, "how under these circumstances *the leaven of Christianity* would work upwards from beneath, as it has done in so many other cases; and from their domestics [i.e. household slaves] and dependants [i.e. freedmen] the master and mistress would learn their perilous lessons in the Gospel."[35] For Harnack, too, Christianity's inward "spread" in the imperial court indicated how Christians serving the emperor, even at an early period, became a factor that was occasionally quite important in the long term expansion of Christianity in the empire.[36]

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[33] Lightfoot 1890: 1.1. 29-30.
[34] Finn 2000: 298.
[35] Lightfoot 1890: 1.1:61. My emphasis.
[36] Harnack 1908: 2.51-2. On Harnack's program see Bremmer 2010: 30-31; White 1985/86.

Neither Lightfoot nor Harnack, for that matter, was alone in his assessment of how a religion moved up from slaves and dependents to the more powerful folks. There is also a longstanding tradition in approaches to Mystery Cults or 'Oriental Religions' in the Roman World that likewise explained the 'spread' of cults and their immigrant deities by the "masses of slaves originally from Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor" who were sold at Delos and taken to Italy and who would "import something of their beliefs to the west."[37] This approach is no more apparent than in Franz Cumont's quite popular *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (1906) in which he explains how Mithraism passed from Asia into the Latin world. Cumont writes:

> [Mithraism] possessed missionaries in the Oriental slaves who were to be found everywhere, engaging in every pursuit, employed in the the public service as well as in domestic work, in the cultivation of land as well as in financial and mining enterprises, and above all in the *imperial service*, where they filled the offices. Soon this foreign god gained the favor of high functionaries and of the sovereign himself.[38]

Cumont's rendition of Mithraism's ascent could just as easily describe the process of Christianity's rise to the sovereign himself "above all" through the "imperial service," i.e. imperial slaves and freedmen.[39] All of this is rather simplistic. Notice how Cumont skips

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[37] Turcan 1996 [1989]: 4-5, 11, 15; Rose 1959: 275; also Nock 1998 [1933]: 66, 131, following Jules Toutain's *Les Cultes Païens dans l'Empire Romain* (1907–20).

[38] Cumont 1956: 149. My emphasis. Originally published in English in 1911.

[39] There are many problems here including racialized interpretations of religion; presumptions about original forms of a religion; biologized assumptions about religion and its carriers (see discussion in Buell 2005: 26-9); stereotypes about immigrants or foreigners as servile (see discussion in McKeown 2007: 11-29); and not least, the idea that mystery cults prepared the way for a superior religion–Christianity. On this see Burkert's discussion of 'Mysteries' stereotypes (1987: 2-3), and more generally Smith 1990. Incidentally, this model of Christianity's growth is what Dimitris Kyrtatas presents in his 1987 book *The Social Structure of the Early Christian Communities*. He explains how imperial freedmen spread

from the imperial service as missionaries to "soon" the sovereign himself favored the god. What happened in between? And *how*, I would like to ask bishop Lightfoot, did Christianity advance silently step by step through the emperors' slaves and freedmen?

I will not attempt to unravel all this here. But suffice it to say that there are some tendentious principles in the triumphalist narrative that, even within recent decades, scholars have utilized. One is genealogical. The majority of scholars who have claimed to survey the material have arrayed the datasets artificially in an unbroken chain. The saints in Caesar's household whom Paul mentions, for example, who allegedly were in Rome, seem be the ancestors to, say, the third century Roman named Carpophorus whom the author 'Hippolytus of Rome' says was a faithful member of Caesar's household in Rome. Likewise, the "faithful ones in the royal palace" to whom Irenaeus alludes appear to be related to the Christians whom Tertullian says fill the "palace." It was also thought that the '*Caesariani*' Cyprian mentions as part of Valerian's rescript were imperial slaves and freedmen, the later manifestation Christians in Caesar's household that began with Paul.[40] As a result of this genealogical idea some view "Caesar's household" as kind of "enclave" for Christians through the first three centuries, or claim that there was "an increasing number of Christians in [imperial] service" and "the imperial household was never, at any point in our period, without its Christians."[41] As I will show, this model is impossible. We have no evidence for Christians serving the emperors or in the imperial

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"Christianity" by comparison with the phenomenon of Mithraism as explained in Cumont's work (Kyrtatas 1987: 84).

[40] Harnack 1908: 2.49; Hirschfeld 1905: 471-75. See also Finn 1987: 34.

[41] McKechnie 2001: 137-49; Finn 1982: 35; Kyrtatas 1987: 76.

household in Rome until the late-second or early-third century CE and that evidence is sparser than scholars have realized.

Another tenet that continued to operate long after Lightfoot and Harnack is that Christianity was ontological. It was a self-evident entity. And to describe the orientation of this entity to its environment several scholars have used the metaphor penetrate/ penetrated/ penetration.[42] Paul's greetings from those who belong to Caesar's household meant that Jesus' "lordship over Caesar," writes Gordon Fee, was "already making itself felt through the penetration of the gospel into the heart of Roman political life."[43] Harry Tajra writes: "This verse [Phil 4:22] clearly indicates that Christianity had spread among certain retainers of the imperial household itself. This Pauline penetration, although involving only those at the bottom of the palace's hierarchy and being much circumscribed in scope, was deeply significant."[44] And "Christianized imperial freedmen," according to Kyrtatas, "would help Christianity to penetrate the upper sections of Roman society."[45]

This language presupposes that Christianity had an essence, as Harnack's famous 1902 essay had argued,[46] that it somehow had a distinct and independent existence in the world apart from the socio-political and cultural context. In short, the language presumes

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[42] Lietzmann 1953 [1937]: 111; Hengel 1974: 37; Peterlin 1995: 150, n. 76; Theissen 2001: 69, 73; Rueman 2008: 739.
[43] Fee 1995: 114.
[44] Tajra 1994: 67. See also Hawthorne who writes "the reason 'Caesar's Household' is singled out may be to show that the gospel was beginning to penetrate even these loftier circles" (2004 [1983]: 281); Caragounis on the penetration of the gospel vis-à-vis Caesar's household (1998: 252); Theissen 2001: 73.
[45] Kyrtatas 1987: 76.
[46] Harnack 1902, originally published in 1900 as *Das Wesen des Christentums*.

that Christianity–and religion more broadly–was something of its own kind (*sui generis*).[47] As many would now argue, however, 'Christianity' was a construction; it was a strategic, contingent, and mutable concept.[48] There was no monolith called Christianity that was penetrating anything. There were only individual imperial slaves or freedpersons who may have identified as Christians.

An additional axiom is that Christianity was creedal. It was primarily a religion of belief or faith–and this was exclusive.[49] In contrast to "what pagans believed," writes Ramsay MacMullen, "Christianity presented ideas that demanded a choice, not tolerance."[50] When the "subject of religion arose," Christians would "spread the word of Christianity" and their "words would strike an answering chord and incline their listeners to belief."[51] This is an "entirely natural" expectation, says MacMullen.[52] More recently James Rives has explained Christian expansion in the Roman world by claiming that "a system in which choices of religious belief and practice were non-exclusive, open-ended,

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[47] In his chapter on "Christian Expansion and Christian Ideology," for example, James Rives states that "[i]n the end we must acknowledge that Christianity represented something genuinely novel, if not absolutely *sui generis* (2005: 41). Since the 1970s the field of religious studies has pivoted away–sometimes violently–from this categorization of religion. See McCutcheon 1997; Pals 1987.

[48] Buell 2005: 24 and 29; Smith 1982: xi.

[49] For discussion see Buell 2005: 35. Ramsay MacMullen, for example, once distinguished Christians as "behavior" with Christianity as "belief" (1983: 178). For the trend of focusing on 'belief' as a primary criterion of religion in the Roman world see the opening lines of Ramsay MacMullen's *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, which begins its survey of religious variety by commenting on the "pullulation of beliefs" (1981: 1). In his book *A World Full of Gods*, Keith Hopkins initiates his explanation of "The Christian Revolution" by describing the "fervent beliefs" and the "core of Christian belief" (1999: 77). Rives was following the work of A.D. Nock. See Nock's comments on adhesion versus conversion as assent to a set of propositions (1998 [1933]: 12, 14, 138) and the "spread of Christianity" vis-à-vis assent to propositions using the example of a man who might then hear Christian preaching that satisfied the inquiring turn of the mind and the desire for escape from fate (1998 [1933]: 193, 209).

[50] MacMullen 1984: 17.

[51] MacMullen 1984: 39, 40, 41.

[52] McMullen 1984: 42.

and virtually limitless were being replaced by one [i.e. Christianity] in which choices were exclusive, sharply defined, and relatively restricted."[53] Rives suggests that Christianity was an ideological system of exclusivity, homogeneity, and totalization.[54] In this way of thinking, it is difficult to explain compromises. Either one believed or did not. There was no "middle ground." So, to flip A.D. Nock's phrase, Christians would be creedal not cultural.[55]

If these ideas are correct it would mean that imperial slaves and freedpersons 'converted' because, fundamentally, they believed in a divinity and maintained those exclusive beliefs.[56] Yet, what we mean by belief, and/or religion, was not necessarily applicable to the ancient world.[57] As many theorists have argued, moreover, 'belief' can be a problematic criterion for understanding religion since it often betrays a modern, privatized (Protestant) Christian conception: namely, belief as a state of mind rather than an activity in the world.[58] To be sure, imperial slaves and freedpersons believed in the existence and power of gods. The god of the Christians may have entered their discourse– see the famous graffito from the *paedagogium* on Rome's Palatine Hill that appears to

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[53] Rives 2005: 16.
[54] Rives 2005: 16.
[55] Nock 1998 [1933]: 7. Nock categorizes adhesion as one foot on each side of a fence, which was cultural and not creedal, or the acceptance of new worships as supplements, not as substitutes; not a new life in place of the old. Nock compares this to mystery cults like Mithraism and paganism (1998 [1933]:14, 138).
[56] It is often thought that the "mission to convert" is what separated Christians from other groups (North 1992: 191-2).
[57] See Brent Nongbri's discussion of *descriptive* and *redescriptive* classifications (2013: 21-2, and also 154-9). More generally, Nongbri 2008.
[58] This was part of Talal Asad's well-known critique of Clifford Geertz (Asad 1993: 45-8). On the issue of belief as constituting religion see also Nongbri 2013: 6-7, 18-19, 95-6. This focus on belief prioritizes Christianity as the primary referent for religion as a whole (Buell 2005: 24).

mock an imperial slave Alexamenos' worship of a crucified, ass-headed figure. But to make belief a primary criterion of analysis for understanding ancient Christians–and my group of ancient Christians especially–is just not very helpful, as we shall see.

The final axiom–the grand assumption–is a teleological one. Many of the now standard reconstructions of early Christian history via the imperial household take 'success' for granted–Christianity was apparently *the* religion of the Roman Empire by the fourth century–and works backwards to seek causal explanations and contributing factors.[59] This is why scholars had been able to take such a shortcut from talking about Christians *in* 'Caesar's household' to talking about Caesar *and his household* as Christian. The 'process' is thus a "simplified appropriation of evolutionary logic," to use Denise Kimber Buell's description.[60] As most would now agree, this logic is seriously flawed. And notably, common opinion now is that Paul's reference to "Caesar's household" occurred not while he was imprisoned in Rome at the end of his life, but more likely earlier, while in Ephesos. However, no sustained study has returned to the issue of Christians in 'Caesar's household' either in the time of Paul or over the next several centuries, whether in Rome or elsewhere. And despite the many changes in the field of New Testament and Early Christian studies over recent decades, the lion's share of this triumphalist narrative has remained intact.[61]

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[59] Buell 2005: 28.
[60] Buell 2005: 28, n.101.
[61] See e.g. McKechnie 2001: 137-149; Finn 2000: 298-9.

Modifications and Models: A 'New' Consensus and the Familia Caesaris

For Harnack and others of his time, the progress of the Christian movement at court was understood primarily as the dissemination–and ultimate triumph–of the message of Christianity in that social and political environment. For nearly a century this notion was an untested legacy in scholarship.[62] But modifications and new models arose during the 1970s, in particular, by considering the development of early Christianity using then-new historical data and social scientific theories.[63] A constituency emerged within the professional guild that undertook the task of a new social description of early Christianity.[64] Included in these new social descriptions was a newer way to describe Christians among the emperor's slaves and freedmen.

Previous treatments of early Christianity tended to think primarily in terms of the broad category of people who joined the movement. As I mentioned above, most considered that Christian converts, at least until the late-second century, were taken from the lowest classes of society–the poor, artisans, slaves, and freed. Adolf Deissmann was an important figure in this vein. He was one of the first scholars to make thorough use of epigraphy and papyrology from the eastern Mediterranean to investigate early Christianity. In his authoritative work *Licht vom Osten* (1908)–still a fascinating read–Deissmann focused on the literary character of early Christian writings, which for him

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[62] White 1985/86: 100-1.

[63] Until then the study of early Christian materials was characterized by an overemphasis on a literary-historical and theological viewpoint (Smith 1975: 19; Malherbe 1983 [1975]: 2-3). The interest in early Christianity as a social phenomenon was not new, though, as Malherbe points out (1983 [1975]: 4). For a survey of some the older scholarship see Malherbe 1983 [1975]: 4-11.

[64] Smith 1975: 19.

was indicative of early Christian social levels. Deissmann's conclusions largely concurred with the then majority opinion: early Christian letters emanated "from the lower classes."[65]

The works of the 1970s challenged the older view, which unfortunately Deissmann increasingly came to represent. By integrating a comprehensive knowledge of the "social facts" (*realia*), socio-political history and theology within an informed theoretical framework,[66] scholars shifted away from 'class' to the *status* of Christians as a primary category of analysis.[67] A fundamental problem with the older views, for example, was that they could not convey exactly what "low" or "high" meant and would "lump together groups who clearly were regarded in antiquity as different."[68] The category of status, by contrast, allowed scholars to picture in better detail the differentiation or stratification of people in Greco-Roman cities.[69] As Wayne Meeks elucidates in his classic book *The First Urban Christians* (1983), an individual

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[65] Deissmann 1927 [1911]: 395. In a famous exchange with the Marxist politician Karl Kautsky, Deissmann had depicted the social levels of early Christians as unlearned, "a movement among the weary and heavy-laden, men without power and position, the poor, the base, the foolish" (1927 [1911]: 466)

[66] Smith 1975: 19.

[67] Friesen 2004: 333. See e.g. Meeks 1983: 53.

[68] Meeks 1983: 53. So for example even Robert Grant stated in 1977 that "Whether or not there actually was a middle class in the late Roman empire, Christian writers supposed that there was, and that most Christians belonged to it" (1977: 88). But note also John Gager's distinction between social class and social status. Rome defined its hierarchical class structure in clear and unmistakable legal terms. So "[t]o admit that some Christians were educated and wealthy does not alter the fact that these individuals, whatever their *status,* represented the lower levels of the Greco-Roman system of social *classes* (1979: 180). In his book *Foundations of Early Christianity*, the Marxist politician Karl Kautsky had actually used the term *lumpenproletariat* to categorize the early Christians (Kautsky 2014 [1908]: 55, 59). Termed by Karl Marx in 1852, *lumpenproletariat* meant persons alongside roués and ruined bourgeoisie, "miscreant," homeless, declassed, degraded working class whose income that is not the result of labor, but of charity, theft, prostitution, etc.

[69] Meeks 1983: 54.

Christian's status was not a single thing–high, low, or middle–but a multidimensional phenomenon that included a series of variables such as one's power, occupation, income, education, etc. and not all dimensions had the same weight.[70]

Moreover, in addition to a focus on status, scholars began to articulate the reality of *social mobility* in the Roman world. That is, various economic and social opportunities in Roman cities allowed social transitions; Christians could better themselves in certain dimensions of status and so move up in Roman society.[71] This social movement "muddled some of the ancient categories" producing "status inconsistency" or "status dissonance"–meaning a person was low in some dimension of status (e.g. education) but high in another (e.g. wealth).[72] According to Meeks, this dissonance produced feelings and reactions of varying power that would often find some form of religious expression, or contrariwise, some kinds of religious symbols, beliefs, and attitudes would enhance, inhibit, or channel social mobility.[73]

Many such findings came to represent a trend in scholarship called the 'New' Consensus, which, in April 1975, Abraham Malherbe had announced was emerging.[74] In reality, there were many distinct social descriptions of early Christianity in the 1970s and

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[70] Meeks 1983: 54.
[71] Meeks 1983: 19-20.
[72] Meeks 1983: 20, 22.
[73] Meeks 1983: 23. Likewise Gager comments on the "frustrated social aspirations (1979: 180).
[74] At the time he described the consensus as a break from older views about the low social level of early Christians. According to recent scholarship, said Malherbe, the social status of early Christians was higher than Deissmann supposed (Malherbe 1983: 31).

1980s.[75] And eight years after Malherbe announced the emerging consensus Meeks was still uncertain if the studies were indeed moving towards a consensus, or what it could mean for the social characteristics of early Christianity if they were.[76] More recently, Steven Friesen has argued that there was no new or old consensus about the social status of early Christian assemblies, just a shift from an industrial capitalist (à la Marxist) interpretation on class, to a consumer capitalist interpretation focused on status. Deissmann actually agreed with the "New Consensus" folks, Friesen says.[77] As we will see in Chapter 2, Deissmann was in fact spot on with some of his observations about Christians in "Caesar's household" during Paul's time.[78]

Notwithstanding these qualifications, there were two important findings that emerged from the new social descriptions of the 1970s. The first was that Christian communities were not just low, middle, or high but represented a mixture of many social levels and divergent rankings in the different dimensions of status.[79] Second, early Christians had real opportunities for upward social mobility in Roman society, and the new studies were trying to show that social mobility worked.[80] Needless to say, these

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[75] There were many studies that have contributed to the current shape of the so-called new consensus–too many to cite here. For orientation see Horrell 1999, Friesen 2004, and the introduction in Judge 2008 [1969].
[76] Meeks 1983: 53.
[77] Friesen 2004: 323-5. There have also been some noteworthy dissents from the 'new' consensus. See Friesen 2004. See also Meggitt 1998, but with it the strong blowback from Martin 2001.
[78] Deissmann, too, thought that "Christianity had risen from the workshop and the cottage to the palace" (1927: 395).
[79] Hengel 1974: 37.
[80] Meeks 1983: 63.

newer methods and theories, along with the new social descriptions, were much more sophisticated than Harnack's work.

As I explain in the following chapter, scholars working on the new social descriptions during the 1980s also began give more nuanced attention to Christians not only in the imperial court, but in the vast collectivity of the emperors' slaves and freedmen across the empire. In scholarly parlance the shorthand for this collectivity is "*familia Caesaris*." The so-called *familia Caesaris* is known as a semi-élite status group in the social stratification of Roman society and has often been described as a kind of imperial 'civil service:' an official bureaucracy with occupations, or posts, and a career structure, which provided its members with regular opportunities of upward mobility and thus economic capital and socio-political influence. So instead of talking about Christians at court, in the imperial family, in imperial administration, in the imperial palace, etc. since the early 1980s scholars have been talking about Christians in the *familia Caesaris*.

This is where we are today. And even in the 2000s some works were still citing the ostensibly powerful and influential Christians that Harnack and Lightfoot had; however, the understanding of *familia Caesaris* as a collective 'civil service' made the social transitions of early Christians seem even more predictable, and the reconstructions of modern scholars more precise. For example, in a chapter on "Mission and Expansion" published in 2000 in a widely-circulated volume of the Routledge Worlds series, Thomas Finn cited the *familia Caesaris* as a primary avenue of early Christian upward mobility. He then described Clement in the following way, and to get the full effect I will cite the entire passage:

> An example of Christian mobility is Clement, reputed to be third bishop of Rome (88-97) and the author of a letter called First Clement (c. 96) addressed to, and at points chiding and correcting, the church at Corinth. Already in the 50s of our era Paul mentioned that there were Christ-followers in civil service (Phil 4:22). Clement was just such a one. He appears to have been assigned to the administrative department at Rome which might now be called the foreign office or state department. He would have been able to write good Greek, handle complex calculations, and exercise authority through correspondence with outside agencies, especially the provinces. As it turns out, Clement also owned a house in the city near the Forum, the centre of Roman public life, which was a sign of considerable standing and substance. Not surprisingly, Clement was prominent in the Roman church. Not only did he handle the foreign affairs of the community (he had no hesitation in interfering in the affairs of the church at Corinth), his home may have been among the earliest of the house-churches there.[81]

This was Finn's quintessential example of how Christians advanced socially in the Roman world. Other Christians travelled this route, too, Finn says. Much in this quotation scholars would now dismiss, but not the characterization of Christians in the *familia Caesaris*. That has remained.

Even the nuanced and theoretically-informed works of social description, including the 'new' consensus, did not radically change the prevailing image of Christians in 'Caesar's household' that the Lightfoot-Ramsay-Harnack triumvirate envisioned. Indeed, the *familia Caesaris* has continued to provide a persuasive and ready-made "model" for social descriptions of early Christianity. And because of the way the *familia Caesaris* is understood, too many scholars have reconstructed Christians in the *familia Caesaris* as upwardly mobile functionaries with enhanced social power in a system propelling its members ever closer to the top of Roman society–in other words, as

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[81] Finn 2000: 298.

a social mechanism for the traditional, triumphalist model. The result: whether the goal is assessing the social, political, or economic levels of early Christian communities in Roman society, or explaining the forces that led to Christianity's rise in the Roman Empire, those who have discussed Christians in the *familia Caesaris* have overestimated the number, power, and influence of those Christian imperial slaves or freedpersons. Even if unintentionally, this usage of the *familia Caesaris* has only prolonged the life of the triumphalist narrative.

Approaches and Methods in This Study

Although this project is about one line of development in early Christian history, it is also about slaves and former slaves of the emperors. The study of religion and Christianity is challenging enough. The study of slavery, as one might expect, presents its own challenges. So trying to integrate the two has often felt like traversing a minefield. To make matters worse the last monograph on the emperor's slaves and freedpersons was published over forty-years ago.[82] Unfortunately whether in the field of New Testament, Early Christianity, or Classics there has not been much new work on the emperors' slaves and freedpersons since that time. Over the last fifteen years, however, there have been many insightful studies on slaves or slavery in early Christianity from which I have benefited.[83] And more recently, a series of excellent works on other forms of Roman

[82] Boulvert 1974.
[83] See e.g. Glancy 2002; Martin 2003; Harrill 2003 and 2006; Osiek 2003; Osiek and MacDonald 2006: 95-117; Nasrallah 2014.

slavery have produced a fresh cache of knowledge that I readily utilized.[84] Both have led me to more principled and informed research.

But as will become clear, my data is extraordinarily diverse. The ancient Christian sources are spread across time and and space, and the emperors' slaves and freedpersons are one of the most attested slave groups in the history of the Roman Empire. They left an enormous footprint: epitaphs, plaques, honorifics, altars, stamps, pillars, personal and household goods (*instrumentum domesticum*), papyri, and graffiti among others attest to their lives and their activities. There are over four-thousand inscriptions–with more trickling in periodically–from all cultural spaces of the Mediterranean, and dating from the Julio-Claudian period–the late-first century BCE–through the Severan period, roughly 240 CE.[85] Imperial slaves and freedpersons were everywhere in the imperial period.

The research thus demands a broad theoretical basis and an interdisciplinary approach. I draw primarily from anthropology and its subfield cultural geography. This field's numerous subdivisions, which are often rich in studies on religion and slavery, help explain a range of human activity and religiosity while still allowing some methodological coherence.

With these insights I re-describe the emperors' slaves and freedpersons using the theoretical categories of labor, migration, and diaspora. Slavery and immigration were cognate phenomena, especially for imperial personnel who were often involuntary,

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[84] Joshel 2010; Petersen 2011; Mouritsen 2011; Bradley and Cartledge 2011; Bell and Ramsby 2012; George 2013; Joshel and Petersen 2015.
[85] The record peters out after that. See Weaver 1972: 25

migratory labor living in Rome and the provinces.[86] Like many in Paul's communities and in early Christian assemblies, imperial slaves and freedpersons were foreigners in urban host lands, navigating complex socio-economic structures and vying for resources.[87] The project thus pans out to consider broader impetuses of geographical mobility and integration in the Roman Empire–such as demography and economy–that shaped human interactions and religious practices.

Moreover, I reject previous approaches to imperial slaves and freedpersons that have used a political-administrative framework to cast them as functionaries in an empire-wide bureaucracy (known as 'the' *familia Caesaris*). I show, in fact, that this reconstruction of *familia Caesaris* is incorrect, and that serving the emperor was a multiform and multi-faceted experience. Instead, I utilize recent studies on family and kinship in the Roman world to understand the bonds that formed from living, working, or socializing together as indicative of the slave families of Caesar. This approach contextualizes imperial personnel among other slave groups in the Mediterranean as well as among ethnic enclaves, voluntary associations/ guilds, and labor networks.

To understand how groups of Christ-devotees and imperial personnel had contact and interfaced, I then deploy social network theory. This is particularly useful for understanding how the "saints in Caesar's household" whom Paul references (Phil 4:22) while in Asia Minor were connected to a community in Philippi. There I focus on four

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[86] See e.g. Noy 2000: x, 55, 99. On slavery vis-à-vis immigration in the United States see Fields 1990: 103-5.
[87] See Harland 2009.

networks in comparative perspective that were cultivated in the Aegean micro-region: ethno-geographic networks, family-household networks, occupation-labor networks, and cultic networks. I also draw from modern case studies on transnational families, immigrant and migratory networks. By marshalling social network theory in other cases, I am then able to reinterpret claims that imperial personnel converted to Christianity. I emphasize that there were several processes at work within networks, and conversion in the traditional sense–an internal, spiritual, psychological turn–is not always the best explanation.[88]

Furthermore, I also reject previous approaches that have interpreted literary references to Christians serving the emperors as sufficiently accurate social description, or as more or less reflective of reality. There is much more to it. The authors producing the references were writing from different parts of the Mediterranean and with different intentions. I use cultural geography and studies of diasporic religion to explain how and why these writers, at that time, were citing faithful ones or Christians serving the emperors.[89] My approach is to reveal how the references are embedded in rhetorically constructed discourses of power that attempt to cross or mark cultural space. I thus foreground memory construction, especially of Paul's martyrdom in Rome, as indicative of Christians' territorial and historical claims.

Put simply, this study requires a careful effort at historical reinterpretation. For example, the fact that there most likely *were* imperial slaves or freedpersons who

[88] For discussion of conversion see Crook 2004: 89, 250.
[89] Johnson 2007; Tweed 1997.

worshipped Christ during this period has lured scholars into misusing material culture as simplistic and ever-proliferating verification. Yet, this approach makes the fundamentally flawed assumption that the ancient inscriptions were proxies for religious identity, like check-boxes on a modern census form. I treat the data differently. I use comparative art historical and anthropological studies as a theoretical base, while applying methods of the epigraphic habit.[90] All of the inscriptions that scholars have cited as evidence for Christians in the *familia Caesaris* were originally three-dimensional epitaphs in particular burial spaces. Many of them have been dated too early (another tendency of the traditional model). I thus situate them–as much as possible–in their archaeological contexts and within the larger corpus of imperial slave and freedperson inscriptions. This resets the so-called Christian inscriptions on a continuum of material culture discourse, one that reflects the burial customs, commemorative practices, and ritual world typical of slave and freedperson kinship networks.

Beneath these individual theoretical angles is a sweeping attempt to bring the epigraphic sources to light, to recover the voices of the emperors' slaves and freedpersons. What distinguishes this project from previous treatments of Christians in 'Caesar's household' is its focus on utilizing the inscriptions at every turn. In many ways and at several points, the stones cry out and challenge accepted wisdom. The epigraphic evidence also qualifies or renders more intelligible the ancient Christian literature that

[90] Elsner 2003a and 2003b; Jensen 2000; Webster 2010; Fennell 2007.

alludes to Christians serving the emperors. Overall, then, the picture of social and religious reality that emerges–even if only fragmentary–is much clearer.

Slaves of Christ: Finding Christians in 'Caesar's Household'

The title of this project derives from a one-liner the character Euelpistus delivers in one version of the *Acts of Justin and Companions*. To the magistrate's interrogation Euelpistus answers that he is slave of Caesar but *now* he is a slave of Christ. To be sure, other imperial slaves and freedpersons in antiquity might well have echoed Euelpistus' confession: "I too am a Christian." But the reality of being both a slave of Caesar and a slave of Christ was probably not as neat as the editors of the *Acts of Justin* make it seem. What exactly 'Christian' would mean for those slaves of Caesar was not so straightforward, either.

Other treatments of Christians in the so-called *familia Caesaris* have not wrestled enough with the implications of claiming that these persons were Christians. Let me give one example. Peter Lampe's wildly popular *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten* (1989, revised in English in 2003) focused on the daily social lives of Roman Christians and the development of their churches in the first three centuries CE. The book analyzed a massive amount of archaeological, epigraphic, historical, and biblical data and was unfailingly sensitive to issues of early Christian social stratification and status. In certain places Lampe is rightly critical of earlier views, especially the idea that the late-first century Christian named Clement was an imperial freedman. Yet,

Lampe's book essentially makes a list of "Christian members of the *familia Caesaris*."[91] He discusses why some of these members should be identified as Christian by merely collecting and arranging the ancient literary references and the inscriptions that scholars have long used as evidence for Christians in the *familia Caesaris*. The result is that we have no idea what being a 'Christian' meant on the ground for those imperial slaves or freedpersons.

Now, part of the problem is that there has been no in-depth investigation of the lives of those ostensible Christians of the *familia Caesaris*. Discussion of Christians serving the emperors have only been ancillary to other projects. This is true of both the modern works and ancient writings. Indeed, it is striking that even the ancient writers who mention saints or faithful ones or Christians serving the emperors provide little information about them or their piety practices. The task of recovery looms large, then. And it does not help that–in my opinion–most scholars have been too unsuspecting when reading these ancient texts or citing inscriptions.

The other half of the problem is that scholars who have dealt with the topic have tended to gloss over the complexities of imperial slave life. Apart from being victims of slavery and all its 'necessities,' imperial slaves and freedpersons also inhabited a fierce loyalty structure. As I contextualized and recovered the voices of some of those imperial slaves and freedpersons who have been identified as Christian, it was evident that their

[91] Lampe 2003: 351.

life-situations would have continually tested, if not precluded, any sort of exclusive loyalty to Christ as we might imagine it in the martyr legends.

Consider the following: The Roman slave system was brutal. It was ideological. It was also, in the case of the imperial slavery system, cosmological. The imperial slave masters were worshipped as gods–some of the emperors thought they were gods[92]–and not only by distant populations of the empire.[93] At home, in the household of the emperor–broadly conceived–his slaves, freedmen, and dependents worshipped his tutelary deity (*genius*) and performed household rituals that upheld his divine authority.[94] What is more, in addition to the proper duty (i.e. piety, *pietas*) of the household cult, the emperor's slaves and freedmen often took initiative to worship him in their own cultic associations, either jointly with other gods or individually (See Figure 1).[95] Then, after their master died he was officially made a deity (*divus*) in a grand ceremony called *apotheosis* in which his soul ascended to heaven where it was worshipped with the other gods. The ceremony also functioned to usher in the son of this god as the new emperor.[96] So slaves and freedmen would continue to worship their former master as an official *divus*, while also carrying on the expected piety of the household cult for their new

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[92] Caligula was such a one according to Philo (οὐ λέγων μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ οἰόμενος εἶναι θεός; *Leg*. 162).

[93] The phenomenon of emperor worship was ubiquitous and multifaceted. There are many helpful studies for sorting through it all. I like Brodd and Reed 2011; Gradel 2002; Friesen 2001 and 1993; Ando 2000; and the classic Price 1984.

[94] Gradel 2002: 99.

[95] Gradel 2002: 213-14, 220-4. The earliest known example of such *cultores* is from Rome and an imperial slave (*Hymnus Caesaris Aug*) is the councilor of the group (*CIL* 6.10267). An *aedicula* was a small shrine-house for a statue figure. They appear to have been manufactured and sold in the vicinity of temples and were transportable receptacles that could be moved from one locale to another or placed on an altar in the home or other building (Fishwick 1993: 238-39).

[96] Davies 2000: 74-5; Gradel 2002: 261-371; Price 1987: 56-105.

imperial master. This description is just scratching the surface. We will consider other scenarios later on.

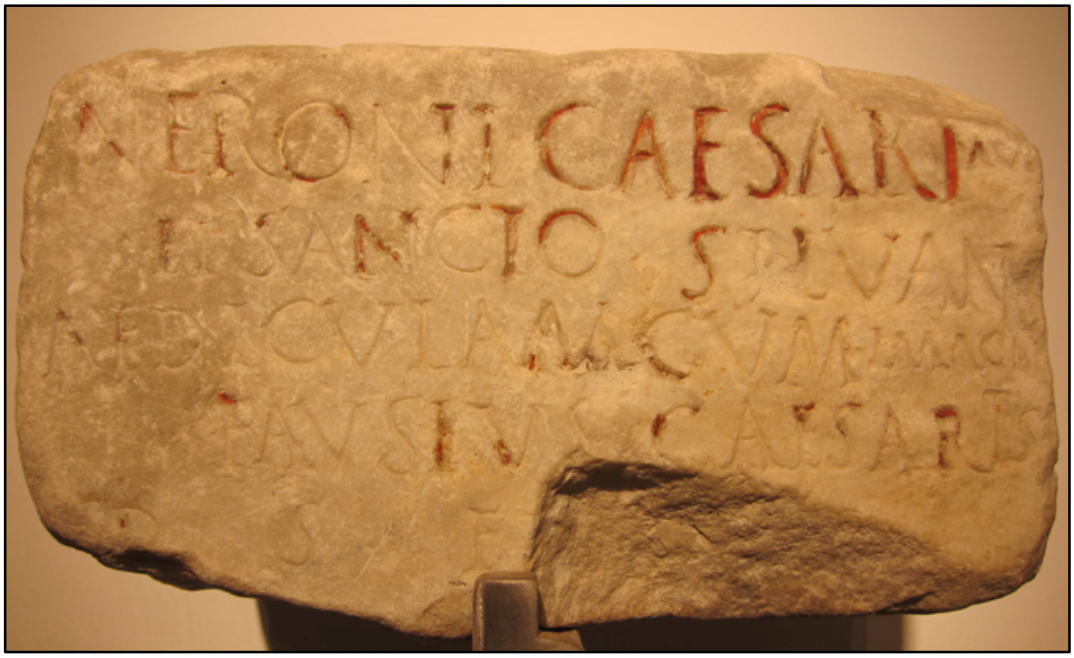

Figure 1: A portable shrine (*aedicula*) for an image of the emperor Nero. The Latin text reads: "For Nero Caesar Augustus and sacred Silvanus. Fausius (slave of) Caesar made this *aedicula* with (its) image from his own (resources)." The images of Nero and Silvanus would have sat atop.

I offer this brief illustration not to suggest that imperial cults were forced upon the population, or that imperial slave managers (*vilici*) were watching every move to ensure that the emperor's slaves worshipped him. This was just not how life worked. Such a scenario would have been impossible, anyway, since tens of thousands of imperial slaves and freedpersons were spread all over Rome and the Empire. Rather, the point is that we should not–and I will not–be naïve about the *piety* that this slave system and this culture

presupposed, or about the religio-cultic responses of those within the system. By comparison, we know from New World slave systems that it was the enslaved who had to adjust their cosmologies, and adapt to and/or adopt the religious practices of their overlords and the dominant culture, not vice versa.[97] Anthropological studies have thus utilized categories such as syncretism, creolization, hybridity, acculturation, and bricolage to describe phenomena in these New World settings.[98]

Taken together, then, the data suggest that a slave(s) or freedperson(s) of the Roman emperor who worshipped the god Christ would also have worshipped the emperor and/or other gods. This may be distasteful to some modern palettes, but for many ancient Christians it was not.[99] The line of Euelpistus in the *Acts of Justin and Companions*, as we will see in chapter 4, was working precisely to combat this simultaneous worship, and to replace such multiform notions of allegiance with uniform and exclusive worship of Christ. Other texts we will consider, like the *Martyrdom of Paul*, were doing something similar.

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[97] See the anthropological case study of Fennell 2007; another case study is Sensbach 1998; also on Santería see Brandon 1993; on Candomblé see Johnson 2002, especially his chapter on "Slaves and Secrets;" likewise Voeks 1997: 1-5, who calls Candomblé the "principal exception to New World Christian hegemony, to total spiritual monopoly." By contrast, Mechal Sobel tried to show how African-American slaves in eighteenth-century Virginia influenced 'white' culture in terms of their conceptions of time, aesthetics, ecstatic experience, understanding the Holy Spirit, and ideas of the afterworld (1987: 11, 233). Sobel's argument was unconvincing, however. See reviews of Mullin 1989 and Wilkinson 1989. This is not to deny that slaves or freedpersons could influence the emperors in some ways, and the over the long haul Candomblé in Brazil is an interesting and distinct case. Rather, I am trying to show that an emperor's wholesale adoption of a 'religion'–be it Mithraism or Christianity–because of his slaves and freedmen defies historical data.

[98] See Fennell 2007: 127-132; Stewart and Shaw 1994; Apter 1991.

[99] As Rives correctly notes, the extent to which people accepted the (supposed) exclusivity of Christian worship, as there is evidence for those who honored the Christian god, identifying themselves as Christians, without entirely abandoning traditional beliefs and practices (Rives 2005: 21).

So my historical curiosity has been unsatisfied with claiming that this or that imperial slave or freedperson was a Christian. As much as possible, I have attempted to enter the complexity and ask how, when, why, under what circumstances would an imperially-owned person have declared 'I am a Christian' or have acted in way that was perceived by others to be indicative of Christians. I have also scrutinized the ancient authors for similar answers, most persistently, inquiring why they made the claims they did about the emperor's slaves or freedpersons.

Ultimately, this project reiterates that the meaning of Christian, especially for imperial slaves and freedpersons, was always constructed, diverse, and situated. The meaning was couched in ancient ideas of geography, memory, race, ethnicity, and history among others. What it meant to be a Christian–if in fact the 'to be' verb is appropriate– was contingent. 'Christian' was a polynomial expression, in the same way that 'Roman' was a discourse of possibilities.[100] And here I will simply cite all the many helpful studies of early Christian identity.[101] Moreover, this project strives for ever more careful and descriptive (emic) language to recapture ancient realities. I have found terms like worship, honor, reverence, devotion, piety, loyalty, participation, affiliation, salience, interconnection, and network to be more helpful than simply 'Christian.' These terms are more equipped to represent the reality that devotion to Christ was not always the zero-sum game ancient Christian authors wanted it to be. For these reasons I also resist the

[100] Revell 2009: x.
[101] Some of my favorites are Lieu 2004; Buell 2005; Harland 2009; Rebillard 2012; Boin 2015. See also Kotrosits 2015.

temptation to make make definitive claims about an imperial slave or freedperson's Christian identity. After all, imperial personnel may have identified themselves as Christian, but they were not *only* Christian. As the third-century apologist Tertullian once quipped, "I am a Christian, certainly–if I so choose."[102]

Plan of Study

This project moves incrementally to break down and rebuild. Much of the work is fine-grained socio-historical analysis–each chapter has a particular area–that then pans out to consider broader motifs. The first task is to understand who the emperors' slaves and freedpersons were, and why they have been so important. Chapter 1 thus introduces the so-called *familia Caesaris* and shows the impact it has had on reconstructions of early Christianity. This leads to a critique P.R.C Weaver's work, which was foundational for understanding *familia Caesaris* as the emperor's slaves and freedmen. I unravel current understandings of the *familia Caesaris* using ancient sources and recent research on Roman slavery. I then show what what *familia Caesaris* really was. I also illustrate how the new–but really ancient–meaning of *familia Caesaris* fits in with several other types of groups in the Roman Empire. By contextualizing imperial slaves among what I call their cultural cognates we are then more equipped to understand their lives in early Christian communities.

Chapter 2 applies the re-description and contextualization of *familia Caesaris* to the Caesar's household Paul mentions in his letter (Phil 4:22). Here I undertake a

[102] Tertullian, *Apol*. 49.5. *Certe, si velim, Christianus sum*.

historical and social reading of the Philippian letter to examine the interconnection between a group of the the emperor's slaves and some of the Philippians across the Aegean region. This involves uncovering Paul's situation and the context of imperial slaves and freedpersons in the diasporic settings of first-century Ephesos and greater Asia Minor. I also sketch a profile of Paul's "Caesar's household" using indictors from his other letters and inscriptions from imperial slaves.

Chapter 3 analyzes the material culture that scholars have used to identify Christian imperial slaves and freedpersons. I reassess the methodology of previous work, particularly the idea of 'Christian' epigraphy, and this leads to a detailed discussion of the archaeological evidence for imperial slaves and freedpersons in the Roman catacombs. I then go through the so-called Christian inscriptions. I reconstruct their contexts, draw out information about the imperial slaves and freedpersons, and explain what they may or may not indicate about Christians in Caesar's household–or 'the' *familia Caesaris* as Weaver and others understood it.

Chapter 4 considers the early Christian literature that references Christians serving the emperors. I restore the references to their original context in the writings, and show how each author or text was using the *idea* of Christians in Caesar's household for particular purposes. As will become clear, my presentation and the emergent panorama is much different than Lightfoot and Harnack's. My investigation moves in a thematic order, which zooms in and out from particular geographies, to illustrate the place of imperial slaves in a burgeoning Christian cultural narrative. This examination explains why the evidence for Christians serving the emperors constellates where and when it

does, and how Christians in 'Caesar's household' have become such an enduring Christian tradition. Ultimately, I demonstrate that the triumphalist narrative is a house of cards, and quite different than the early Christian cultural narrative that wielded the emperor's house–broadly conceived–as a flexible, and widely used tool for self-fashioning.[103]

Note on Terminology

Throughout this project I use single and double quotation marks to flag the phrase Caesar's household. Single quotes indicate a trope–imperial palace, those who worked there, the emperors' slaves and freedpersons, etc.– while double quotes indicate an allusion to Paul's line in Phil 4:22. The trope and the verse have often been elided, and that is one of the problems this study resolves. Scholars have also used a range of terminology, which is unfortunate but understandable. There was no standard ancient term for describing all the emperor's slaves or freedpersons, but a misunderstanding of what Paul's "Caesar's household" (Phil 4:22) indicated has allowed the phrase to become a locus of scholarly imagination.

So in the second half of Chapter 1, I begin using 'imperial personnel' as a redescriptive (etic) phrase for all or any who served the emperors as slaves or freedpersons. Likewise, when I use the term 'serve,' as in those "serving the emperor(s)" I am indicating those persons who were working for the emperors directly, whether in the palace, or elsewhere, including in the larger imperial administrative system. The phrase

[103] Buell 2005: 169.

'imperial personnel' is thus meant to be a clearly constructed, umbrella term in distinction to *familia Caesaris*, which in antiquity was a specific, descriptive (emic) term. Beginning in Chapter 2, I will also use the phrase 'Caesar's household' only as a direct English translation of an ancient usage. As we will see, in ancient literature the phrase meant something rather specific, and this was distinct from many of its other usages in scholarly discussion such as imperial 'palace.'

When I use the term 'slave' I mean a person–male or female–whom the emperor legally owned as property. I use the term 'freedperson' for any imperial slave who has been manumitted, and as a gender inclusive expression. We know from inscriptions that there were many women who were slaves or former slaves of the emperor, even if they are not as well represented in the overall epigraphic corpus. When I use the term 'freedman' it is either because I am talking about a former slave of the emperor who was male, or only to channel the traditional ways of describing the *familia Caesaris*.

CHAPTER 1

THE LUCKIEST SLAVES OF ALL: STORIES OF THE *FAMILIA CAESARIS*

"*You will think it a joke–or an outrage, but a joke after all–if you read this*."
--- Pliny the Younger[1]

INTRODUCTION

Everyone loves success stories. Well, almost everyone. The sight of an inscription recording honors the Roman Senate decreed for Marcus Antonius Pallas a freedman of the emperors' Claudius and Nero made Pliny the Younger, writing half a century later, question the honor of his country. "How ridiculous! What a farce!" (*mimica et inepta*), Pliny vented to his friend Montanus, that honors could be thrown away on such "dirt" (*sordes*). After seeing the monument on the road to Tibur, a half a mile from Rome, Pliny apparently couldn't let it go. He later took the time to look up the actual decree of the Senate then disparaged the degradation all over again in a second letter to Montanus.[2] The idea that Pallas, a former slave of Antonia Minor, could rise from the "bottomless sea of servitude" to powerful heights as the treasurer and secretary of an emperor, worth

[1] The opening line of his letter to Montanus after seeing a monument and inscription of the imperial freedman Pallas (*Ep*. 7.29). The poet Martial (c. 38-104 CE) presents another conventional image of the power of imperial freedmen when he writes to Ponticus: "I have a lawsuit on hand with Balbus: you, Ponticus, are unwilling to offend Balbus: I have one on hand with Licinus; he also is a person of importance. My neighbour Patrobas often trespasses on my little field: you are afraid to oppose a freedman of Caesar. Laronia refuses to restore my slave, and keeps him for herself: you tell me 'she is childless, rich, old, a widow.' It is idle, believe me, to hope for service from a friend who is himself in service. Let him be a free man, who wishes to be my master" (*Ep*. 2.32).
[2] Pliny, *Ep*. 7.29 and 8.6.

millions of sesterces, was almost too much for Pliny to bear.[3] But then to grant him the rank of *praetor*, a decurial post with senatorial honor?–that was just shameful.

What sent some Roman authors into fits of rage, however, has often captured the modern scholar's imagination. Social mobility, status inconsistency, political influence, and wealth have been touchstones of the "beavering slave and freedmen bureaucrats working behind the Roman Emperors, with their secrets and subtleties of career structures."[4] These beavering slaves and freedmen are collectively and conventionally known as the *familia Caesaris*.

Not too far outside of Roman history 'the *familia Caesaris*' has also been powerful in shaping certain studies of Paul, Early Christian literature, and early Christianity in the Roman Empire. Yet, the now-standard portrayals of the *familia Caesaris*, including imperial freedmen like Pallas, have led some to draw connections between the *familia Caesaris* and early Christian communities that need revising. But rather than a point-by-point analysis of previous scholarship, what is more important here is a re-description of the *familia Caesaris* itself. As I will show, there was no such thing as 'the' *familia Caesaris* in the modern, conventional sense. There were only individual *families* of Caesar primarily comprised of imperial slaves that formed groups around work, proximity, cultic affiliation, etc. These disparate groups of imperial slaves resembled voluntary associations. The conventional characterization of *familia Caesaris*

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[3] Friedländer 1979 [1862]: 1.37. Tacitus, *Ann*. 12.53; Suetonius, *Claud*. 28. Dio Cassius says he was worth 400 million sesterces (*hist*. *Rom*. 61.14).
[4] Clarke 2005b: 67.

members as upwardly mobile, typically prosperous slave and freed functionaries, thus needs a serious overhaul.

Before getting there, however, we need to understand why a re-description is necessary, so in the first half of the chapter I assess the history of what we know as the *familia Caesaris*. Among other results, tracing out the methodological roots will help explain how and why 'the' *familia Caesaris* was received the way it was at a key moment in New Testament and Early Christianity scholarship. The analysis will then move to (re)introduce some problems with how the *familia Caesaris* was originally conceived by its principal architect, P. R. C. Weaver. My critique in this section will elicit questions about the social, economic, and political status of imperial slaves and freedpersons in the Roman world more broadly, and in relation to early Christian communities more particularly. The final part of the chapter re-describes the *familia Caesaris*. I do this mainly by utilizing the ancient sources that refer to *familia Caesaris*–something Weaver did not do. The resulting picture is vastly different from what Weaver and others have long described as 'the' *familia Caesaris*, though it is no less significant for understanding the relationship between early Christian communities and the Roman emperor's slaves and former slaves.

THE *FAMILIA CAESARIS*: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

The *familia Caesaris* was born from a mass of more than four thousand inscriptions.[1] Although by the beginning of the twentieth century scores of these had already been catalogued in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, as a field of study imperial slaves and freedpersons were almost entirely neglected until the 1960s and 1970s.[2] In this period, when studies in epigraphy, archaeology, and other related disciplines "reached maturity" making detailed research on Roman society increasingly possible,[3] three major works on imperial slaves and freedmen appeared nearly simultaneously. Heinrich Chantraine's *Freigelassene und Sklaven im Dienst der römischen Kaiser*, published in 1967 under the auspices of Joseph Vogt and Hans Instinsky, was a meticulous study of imperial slave and freedmen nomenclature. This work was hard-won and laid a methodological foundation for future studies by organizing the epigraphic mass, explaining the social status indicators, and establishing chronologies.

Then in 1970 Gérard Boulvert published *Esclaves et affranchis impériaux sous le Haut-Empire romain*. This revised thesis was directed by M. Jean Macqueron, a professor in the faculty of law at l'Université d'Aix-Marseille, who was just finishing his own tome *Histoire des Obligations: Le Droit Romain* (1971). Boulvert's extensive monograph principally examined the official duties (*rôle politique et administratif*) of

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[1] See Weaver 1972: 299. The emperors' *familia* is the greatest epigraphically attested slave and freedperson group in all regions of the Roman Empire (Herrmann-Otto 1994: 101).
[2] Weaver 1972: ix.
[3] Treggiari 1975: 150.

imperial slaves and freedmen in Rome and the provinces. This would be followed in 1974 by a second volume aimed at the social and economic condition of imperial slaves and freedmen, but it did not appear before Weaver published his now-classic book *Familia Caesaris* in 1972.

Weaver's social study of the emperor's slaves and freedmen–the most well-known and authoritative in the Anglophone world–utilized Chantraine and Boulvert's work (1970) throughout. But, as Weaver relates, his work owed its origin to a 1949 article of A. H. M. Jones on "The Roman Civil Service (Clerical and Sub-Clerical Grades)."[4] Among other aspects, Jones' seminal article explored the evolution of imperial slaves and freedmen as a new civil service in the *principate* using descriptors of imperial slaves and freedmen that would become standard: "grades," "careers," "relatively high social station," and "important functionaries."[5]

Thus, although many works during the 60s and 70s were beginning to examine with new methods the rich varieties of social groups in Roman society, prosopography still held sway.[6] This mode of historical inquiry, which Ronald Syme had triumphantly exploited in 1939, focused on the careers, connections, and social interactions of the elite, aristocratic families and their political groupings, especially in the political, governmental, or administrative spheres.[7] Collection and analysis of data, and examination of social mobility in a definable group, was often done in terms of a

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[4] Weaver 1972: ix; Jones 1949: 43, n. 50.
[5] Jones 1949: 43.
[6] Peachin 2011: 4-5.
[7] Treggiari 1975: 150 and 2002: 10-11; Peaching 2011: 4-5.

particular Roman 'order' (*ordo*) such as the senators of the equestrians (*equites*).[8] Notably, Weaver had worked closely with Jones while he was in the midst of compiling his mammoth *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, published (posthumously) only a year before Weaver's book. And as a primary analogue for imperial slaves and freedmen, both Boulvert and Weaver relied on H. G. Pflaum's *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le haut-empire romain* (1960), a model work in Roman prosopography.

Consequently, the study of imperial slaves and freedmen was still very much in the vein of political history. The initial and major works focused on the role of imperial slaves and freedmen in the administration of the empire, whether in particular branches of a bureaucracy or in geographic divisions.[9] (Boulvert's 1970 volume was the premier example). These studies were enmeshed in formal, legal, and institutional matters of the Roman state. When they turned to social aspects of imperial slaves and freedmen they nonetheless investigated the data as it pertained to the official or governmental implications.[10] Weaver tried to buck the trend with a social study–one that was before its time in many respects–but he was only partially successful, as will become clear.

This politico-administrative framework, still influenced by Roman prosopography, had several significant effects. First, it characterized imperial slaves and

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[8] Treggiari 2002: 11.

[9] Nichols 1978: 1. See e.g. Liebenam 1886; Hirschfeld 1906; Jones 1949; Wachtel 1966; Chantraine 1967; Boulvert 1970. Geographic: Wolf 1965; Mangas Manjarrés 1971. More recently Eck 1995: 1-28 and 1998: 219-244.

[10] See e.g. Nichols 1978: 187; Boulvert 1974.

freedmen as an official, and highly structured group.[11] Sorting through the inscriptions and earlier pioneering works, for instance, Weaver organized the emperors' freedmen and slaves into a domestic and administrative branch.[12] The domestic branch included the staff engaged in personal service to the emperor (e.g. chamberlains, valets, tailors, cooks, gardeners etc.), whether in the Palace at Rome or other imperial villas of the emperor's vast estates (*patrimonia*). The administrative branch was "employed" in "departments" such as "the central financial bureaux in Rome" and assisted the emperor in his duties as magistrate (e.g. couriers, accountants, record-keepers, procurators, etc.).[13] Together, the two branches comprising all the emperor's slaves and freedmen is what Weaver called the *familia Caesaris*.

Second, the political field was the domain where these imperial slaves and freedmen were located in Roman society. According to Weaver and Boulvert, Augustus *created* an institution of slaves and freedmen as a "second order" aristocracy–the virtual

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[11] And in truth, the epigraphic catalogues from which Weaver culled his data, namely *CIL* volume 6, had in many cases already preloaded the classifications for imperial slaves and freedpersons as "officials." For example, the editors of *CIL* volume 6, part 2 (1882) listed imperial slaves and freedmen as "officials" under headings like *Tituli Officialium* and O*fficiales Augustorum*, etc. and grouped the inscriptions in categories such as *officiales annonae* or *officiales a rationibus* that appear highly structured and formalized. Otherwise, the imperial slaves and freedmen were listed alphabetically according to their "professions" (*artifex*) such as *actores, ab admissione*, etc. but still under the broader headings *ex familia Augustua* and *Officialium*. Yet, the presentation has largely segregated the *familia Caesaris* from the material record of other slave and freed groups.

[12] Weaver 1972: 5 and n.1, following Boulvert.

[13] Weaver 1972: 230. There was no clear-cut separation of the branches, as mobility up or across was possible, in some cases normal, and no clear division between "personal" and "state" (Weaver 1972: 5).

ordo libertorum et servorum principis–to counterbalance the power of the senate.[14] "The emperor from the beginning," Weaver writes

> was at great pains to create institutions of his own devising and under his own control as a bulwark for his own position, a source of power to counterbalance that of the senate, and as a channel for the reservoir of talent and energy in all parts of the empire and in all sections of society to be usefully employed in administering and defending the empire. Augustus was the creator of the equestrian order in its vastly changed Imperial form; he was also the creator of the Imperial civil service which from the beginning of the Principate employed not only equestrians in responsible positions but also freedmen and slaves.[15]

In short, then, imperial slaves and freedmen became known as "the "governing class of the *imperium*."[16]

Third, in this political schema imperial slaves and freedmen formed "an élite status-group."[17] This status was a result of their extreme social mobility. Like others in this time, Weaver began to incorporate sociological methods in his analysis. In particular, to analyze his own data Weaver used a then cutting-edge work by Keith Hopkins on "Élite Mobility in the Roman Empire" (1965).[18] We will return to this shortly. Using Hopkins's work, Weaver thus understood social mobility in three ways: (1) as a "process of status dissonance;[19] (2) as a "product of structural differentiation of institutions;" and (3) as a product of political "conflict." For example, Augustus had elevated his slaves and freedmen *as a group* to offset the aristocracy (*political conflict*). In so doing, Augustus

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[14] Weaver 1967: 14-16; Weaver 1972: 5-7, especially pg. 5, n.1. Augustus creates "un nouveau régime politique" (Boulvert 1974: 5), similarly Fabre 1992: 123. More recently, Hernández Guerra 2013: 102.
[15] Weaver 1967: 14; Hopkins 1965: 15, 20;
[16] Christ 1984: 79.
[17] Weaver 1972: 5, n.1.
[18] See also Hopkins 1961.
[19] Weaver 1967: 3.

also created an institution with positions for administering the empire. This offered professions, careers, and opportunities for advancement (*structurally differentiated institution*).[20] Imperial slaves and freedmen in this institution had access to positions of power and wealth that went far beyond their station at birth (*status dissonance*). As Georges Fabre once described it: the "rise in power of this army of domestic and public servants" was due to the emperor who "guaranteed their way of life, determined their advancement and constituted the essential element of their social prestige."[21]

Moreover, because Augustus allegedly turned imperial slaves and freedmen into an aristocratic and institutional second order, the *familia Caesaris* paralleled the equestrian *ordo* in Rome's social hierarchy. For Weaver, the equestrians then offered a more precise comparative to configure social mobility in the *familia Caesaris*. Like their aristocratic counterparts, imperial slaves and freedmen in the "civil service," it was thought, had a clearly defined career hierarchy with rules for and stages with its own *cursus honorum*.[22] Upward mobility was standardized: "[T]here was a regular system of annual *promotion*, probably in November," Weaver says.[23] By the end of a long career, imperial freedmen could retire as tycoons.[24] Some freedmen, it was thought, could rise beyond their own virtual *ordo*, breaking through the hierarchical ceiling to become

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[20] Weaver 1967: 14. Finn 2000: 299.
[21] "De la montée en puissance de cette armée de domestiques et fonctionaires, défenseurs des interest d'un maître ou patron qui en retour garantissait leurs moyens de vie, réglait leur advancement et constituait l'élément essential de leur prestige social, les historiens romains, lies aux orders privilégiés, n'ont pas toujours donné une image favorable (Fabres 1992: 123)."
[22] Weaver 1964; 1972: 224-81; Boulvert 1974: 11-98; Garnsey and Saller 1987: 25; Alföldy 1988 [1975]: 108; The idea of "careers" for imperial slaves and freedmen is older. See Jones 1949: 43.
[23] Weaver 1967: 12. My emphasis.
[24] Finn 1982: 32.

equestrian procurators.[25] As a result, the *familia Caesaris*, especially the administrative branch with its career structure, became a predictable and continual *source* of upward mobility in the Roman Empire.[26]

Hence, Weaver's now-standard characterizations of the *familia Caesaris*:

> Some of the most spectacular examples of social mobility in the early empire are Imperial freedmen. Many rose from humble slave status in a junior post in the emperor's service, to freed status with a responsible position in the bureaucracy; and some, because of their ability, which was usually financial, and their legal and often personal relationship to the emperor, reached senior posts from which they exercised great and, in a few cases, undue influence in the Imperial power structure. The cases of Licinus under Augustus, Pallas and Narcissus under Claudius, Epaphroditus and Helius under Nero, the father of Claudius Etruscus and Hormus under Vespasian, and Parthenius under Domitian illustrate the continuity of this phenomenon throughout the first century.[27]

Other influential works soon echoed. Ramsay MacMullen (1974) called the emperor's slaves the "luckiest slaves of all" because they "sometimes owned their own slaves, traveled in pomp and luxury on the emperor's business, commanded deference from all but the highest aristocracy, and after manumission vaulted to monied prominence among the freeborn. They did not typify life in servitude."[28] Likewise, "in view of their favourable economic circumstances and their position of power," Géza Alföldy said (1975), "the slaves and freedmen of the emperor (*familia Caesaris*) can also be counted,

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[25] So scholars have suggested for Tiberius Claudius Classicus from Ephesos (*IvE* 852=*AE* 1972, 574); Weaver 1980 and Boulvert 1981, but compare Bruun 1990: 282-85. Other imperial freedmen were promoted, to name a few: Narcissus received the decoration of a *quaestor*, Pallas that of a *praetor*, Icelus (Galba's freedman) and Asiaticus (Vitellius' freedman) were given equestrian status, but overall such promotion is rare; Bruun 1990: 283.

[26] Weaver 1967: 4.

[27] Weaver 1967: 4-5.

[28] MacMullen 1974: 92, citing Etienne and Fabre 1970: 90-3; Frank 1916: 697.

by and large, with the upper strata of the Roman empire."[29] Accordingly, in his proverbial pyramid, the *familia Caesaris* is its own elite institution–a steep isosceles triangle with the majority of its area in the "Upper Strata," slicing through the *ordo equester* and *ordo senatorius*.[30] Richard Duncan-Jones' (1974) list of fortunes during the principate awarded four of the top ten spots to imperial freedmen: for instance, Pallas was reportedly worth 300 million sesterces (HS). Narcissus, Claudius' freedman, was worth 400 million sesterces (HS), making him the richest person in the history of the Roman Empire–excluding emperors, of course.[31]

The *familia Caesaris* that emerged from the 1970s, therefore, was an elite, bureaucratic institution of administrators[32] in which upward mobility through a career structure was inherent. Individuals in the *familia Caesaris* it seemed were en route to becoming, if not already, socially–and often economically–prestigious and influential people in Roman society.[33] This was the *familia Caesaris* that entered the field of New

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[29] Alföldy 1988 [1975]: 132

[30] Herrmann-Otto 1994: 100; Theissen 2001: 74.

[31] Duncan-Jones 1982 [1974]: 343; Cassius Dio, 60.34; for Pallas, see Tacitus, *Ann*. 12.53. Aspiring emperors could look up to certain imperial freedmen as power-shifters. Vitellius reportedly revered Narcissus and Pallas as guardian deities in the form of golden images among his household *lares* (Suetonius, *Vit*. 2.5), and Narcissus' influence (*gratia*) was apparently responsible for Vespasian's appointment as legionary legate (Suetonius, *Vesp*. 4.1).

[32] Treggiari 1975: 158.

[33] Stegemann and Stegemann locate the *familia Caesaris* in the "Upper-Stratum Groups" as "retainers" who "assumed duties for their masters in prominent political positions or performed important administrative tasks in the private sphere." They proceeed: "Without doubt those who stand out here [in social power authority and privilege] are the members of the *familia Caesaris*, who in Rome itself, but also in the provinces, held influential postitions and exercised noteworthy privileges (Stegemann and Stegemann 1998 [1995]: 70)." Stegemann and Stegemann, however, rightly delineate the *familia Caesaris* from the elite, emphasize the contingency or fickleness of their social position, and call attention to social inequality. Earlier E. A. Judge wrote: "Upon [the emperor's slaves and freedmen] fell much of the day-to-day administration of such public affairs as were entrusted to the Caesar; they constituted a kind of imperial

Testament and Early Christian studies just when it was making its own turn towards a new social description of early Christianity.

One of the most recognizable results of this social description was the so-called 'New Consensus' that was emerging by the early 1980s. I will not rehash the topic here.[34] But suffice it to say that in showing the varieties of social and economic levels in early Christian communities, and the ways that early Christians could be upwardly mobile in Roman society–invaluable contributions–scholars who came to represent this new consensus also found in the *familia Caesaris* a comparable and persuasive *model*.[35] This caused some problems.

The available formulations and characterizations of the *familia Caesaris*, coming principally from Weaver's work, sanctioned two assumptions. First, some scholars could suppose that "believers in Christ from the *familia Caesaris*" also belonged in or near "the upper stratum," even though in the majority of cases "we do not know either their specific rank within the group of imperial servants or whether they were slaves or freed individuals."[36] Second, because of the supposed dynamic system of upward mobility-cum-promotion in the *familia Caesaris* scholars could chart Christian imperial slaves and freedmen–even Christian communities–on an upward track in Roman society.

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bureaucracy. Their occupation conferred social distinction upon them; among their legal equals they were regarded as a special class…Their services in the administration frequently earned them emancipation, leading in turn to rapid promotion and high honours that scandalized the traditional aristocracy (2008 [1960]: 23)."

[34] See discussion in the introduction.

[35] See the opening comments to Smith's 1975 article.

[36] Stegemann and Stegemann 1999 [1995]: 293, also 65, and for their social pyramid 72.

Here are some examples. Wayne Meeks' masterful *The First Urban Christians* (1983) describes social mobility within "Pauline Christianity" thusly:

> [O]ne particular group of slaves and freedmen who constituted probably the most [socially] mobile category that can be identified in Roman society, and among whom we know quite explicitly there were Christians of the Pauline circle [citing Phil 4:22]. These were members of the *familia Caesaris*, the "household of Caesar"…the *familia Caesaris* was virtually the civil service of the empire, in the provinces no less than in Rome. This brought enormous power to some individual freedmen of the emperors and, to many members of the household, opportunities for advancement that constituted stages in a career analogous to the formal *cursus honorum* of the equestrians. Several recent intensive studies of the inscriptional evidence have documented the restless upward movement of the imperial slaves. The clearest indicator of their enhanced social power is the tendency of slaveborn members of the household to marry freeborn wives–a kind of union rare in the rest of society. P. R. C. Weaver calculates that nearly two-thirds of the male members of the *familia Caesaris* [slave and freed] married freeborn wives.[37]

Note the process: Meeks used Weaver's model of the *familia Caesaris* to understand the individual Christians of Phil 4:22 as upwardly mobile. Then, the upwardly mobile individuals who were part of the *familia Caesaris* became a weighty criterion for measuring the social levels of Pauline Christians as a whole. And as an example of the "rise of the freedmen" in the *familia Caesaris*, and the status inconsistency it drew, Meeks cites the imperial freedman Pallas.[38] So while Meeks makes no direct comparison between "Caesar's household" of Phil 4:22 and the imperial freedman Pallas, the fact that the two are separated by less than a page of printed text shows how persuasive Weaver's model of the *familia Caesaris* was. Meeks later observes that Paul's reference to

[37] Meeks 2003: 21-2, singling out Weaver 1972 and 1967 from Boulvert 1970 and 1974, and Chantraine 1967.
[38] Meeks 2003: 22.

"Caesar's household" withholds names, number, legal status (slave, freed, or both), and position in the *familia*, but nonetheless writes: "the imperial slaves and freedmen *as a group* had greater real opportunities for upward social mobility than did any other nonelite segment of Roman society, and it is a precious bit of information [Phil 4:22] that some members of this group had found reason to be initiated into Christianity at so early a date."[39]

Now, Meeks' work in early Christian social history was cutting-edge, and it used Weaver's work successfully, even if–in my view–not critically enough. But because Meeks effectively stamped Weaver's *familia Caesaris* with approval others at the time readily adopted *familia Caesaris* with less caution. So in his 1990 book *Slavery as Salvation*, Meeks' student Dale Martin could even describe "*slavery as upward mobility*" in Paul's context by citing Weaver's study of the *familia Caesaris* and highlighting the imperial freedmen Narcissus, Pallas, and Epaphroditus.[40]

A more extreme application of Weaver's model appeared in James Jeffers' well-known 1991 book *Conflict at Rome*. In his chapter on the identities of Roman Christians, Jeffers suggested Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito the couriers of *1 Clement* (1 Clement 65) were Christian imperial freedmen, the former Claudius' and the latter Messalina's.[41] He then writes:

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[39] Meeks 2003: 63. My emphasis.
[40] Martin 1990: 30-31.
[41] Jeffers 1991: 29.

> The most outstanding examples of rising social status in the early empire are all found in the freedmen of the emperor, the members of the *familia Caesaris* [citing Weaver]. The *familia Caesaris* consisted of those who maintained the emperor's properties and supervised the revenues of the empire. Those who rose to the top of this latter group achieved a status far above that of most people in Rome. The typical path of civil service, the *cursus honorum*, began when the imperial slave boy underwent training in a school such as that of the *Caput Africae* on the Caelian Hill…Upon completing training, the student spent several years in domestic service. At the age of twenty, he entered the civil service and usually occupied a number of minor posts. After receiving freedom around age thirty, he could move on to intermediate posts…In his forties, he might serve in senior posts…Because of his rising social status, even prior to manumission he could marry a freeborn woman, possess his own slaves, and acquire considerable wealth. His position in the imperial bureaucracy allowed him to exercise power far beyond that of any non-Roman or poor Roman citizen (Jeffers 1991: 30).

Jeffers associates the process of social mobility in the *familia Caesaris* with the individual Christians Ephebus and Bito. He then uses this association to define the Christian community in Rome at the end of the first century.[42] The imperial freedmen Ephebus and Bito were "undoubtedly leaders of some sort in the Roman congregations," according to Jeffers, and "Clement," the supposed author who dispatched Ephebus and Bito, "and many of those in his house church were trusted slaves of the emperor or the great houses."[43]

In similar fashion Gerd Theissen reproduces the problem in visual form. He manipulates Alföldy's pyramidal stratification of Roman society and equates Christianity with the *familia Caesaris* itself (Figure 2). Theissen replaces a social description of "Christians" with a description of "*early Christianity*," which "comprised all social levels

[42] Jeffers 1991: 101.
[43] Jeffers 1991: 31, 102.

and groups," and "[i]n particular cases *Christianity* also penetrated the elite."[44] "There is only one analogy to this phenomenon," Theissen asserts, "and that is the family of the Caesar."[45]

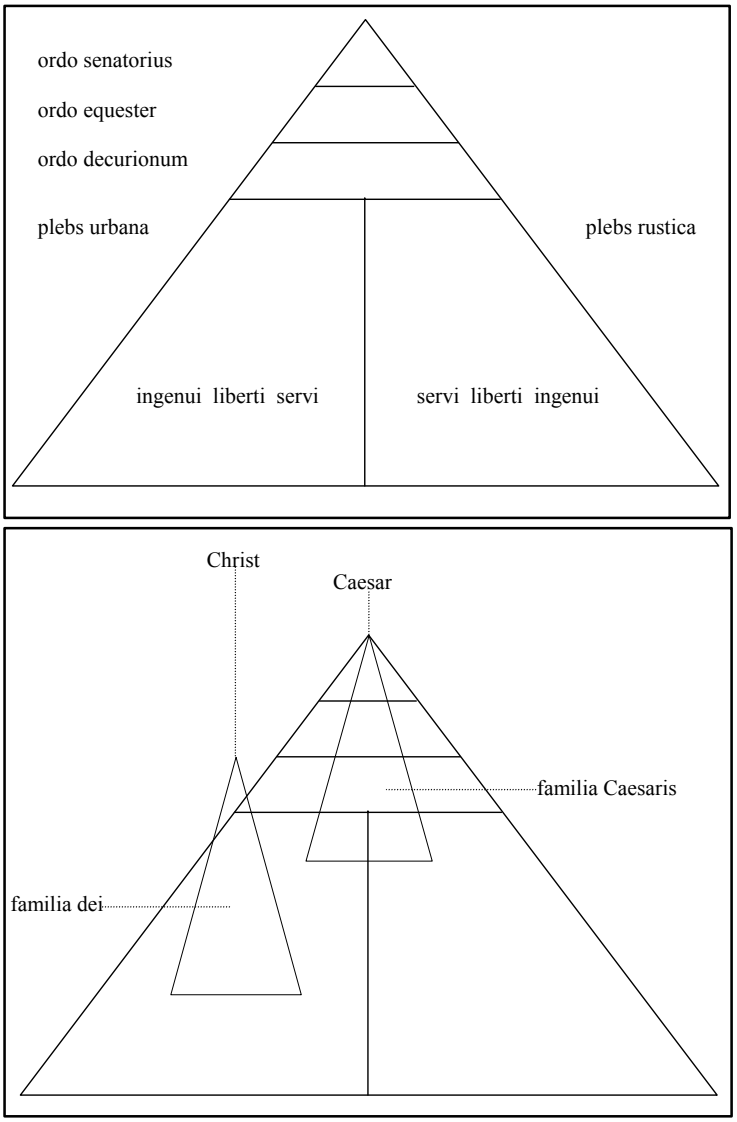

Figure 2: Theissen's reinterpretation of Alföldy's social pyramid showing the "family of god" in relation to the elevated *familia Caesaris*.

[44] Theissen 2001: 73.
[45] Theissen 2001: 73. See also Theissen 1999: 54.

Weaver's work allowed scholars chart individual Christian members of the *familia Caesaris* as upwardly mobile and thereby situate early Christian communities in Roman society.[46] Notice how easy the process of social mobility in the *familia Caesaris* seems, and how the authors can speak of a career (*cursus honorum*) in civil service, an expected transition from slave to freedman, upward movement, rising social status, and power as if they were due process. Yet, by utilizing Weaver's model scholars made what we can call a synecdochic connection. That is, the supposed nature of the *familia Caesaris* as a whole personified the experiences of individual Christians thought to be members of the *familia Caesaris*. For example, in the absence of any definitive information on the individuals from Phil 4:22 and 1 Clement 65– in fact there is no convincing evidence that Ephebus and Bito were imperial freedmen, as we shall see–the general (*familia Caesaris*) stands in for the unknown particulars (Christian imperial slaves or freedpersons).

Compounding the issue is what can be described as a metonymic association in which the supposed social level of individual Christians in the *familia Caesaris* comes to represent the social level of the whole Christian community, even without secure knowledge of the exact position of the imperial slave or freedperson. Even if some individual Christian imperial slaves or freedpersons were socially mobile, however, the *familia Caesaris* cannot indicate the social progress of *Christianity* as a whole. There is

[46] Meeks was working more on the "social world" of early Christianity, to use Jonathan Z. Smith's terms (Smith 1975: 21), and the relationship between social mobility and religious expression (Meeks 2003: 23). Jeffers represents more "social history" of Christianity–again using Smith's designations– that focuses on the *realia*, social and political history in a specific city (Smith 1975: 19-20).

also no necessary connection between individual Christians in imperial service and the supposed typical characteristics of the *familia Caesaris* as a group.

Other scholars would go farther still. Those who focused on the "social organization" of early Christianity–what Jonathan Z. Smith once called the "most traditional" sense of social description–[47] had a field day with Weaver's ideas. Thomas Finn, for instance, explained how "pre-Constantinian Christianity moved upward in the system of Roman social stratification on the backs of Christians" in the "imperial civil service."[48] After regurgitating *familia Caesaris* stereotypes–the education, the *cursus honorum*, the prestige, marriage to freeborn women, regular manumission, economic advantages, and power–Finn, like Adolf von Harnack, traced Christianity from Phil 4:22, to 1 Clement and to other references in second century literature, to second and third century epigraphy, and ended in the third century with Cyprian's "*Caesariani*" and the failed persecutions of Valerian and Decius. Throughout his primary-source tour, Finn thought he detected a "gradual rise of an increasing number of Christians in imperial service," and concluded that "Christianity spread so rapidly in the Empire in part because Christians…took advantage of the avenues of upward social mobility" such as the imperial civil service.[49] For his understanding of social mobility Finn pays homage to the "pioneering studies of M. K. Hopkins and P. R. C. Weaver."[50] Finn's later (2000) article

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[47] Smith 1975: 20.
[48] Finn 1982: 31.
[49] Finn 1982. 35.
[50] Finn 1982: 31, n.2. Following Weaver and Finn, others have also suggested that the reference in Phil 4:22 "points to one of the more important processes of vertical mobility whereby *Christianity* moved up

on Christianity's "Mission and Expansion" again emphasizes that Christianity's "growth was not just in numbers nor was spread only geographic; Christians advanced socially," and "already" in Paul's time Christians did so via the imperial service.[51]

Likewise, in a section entitled "The Significance of the Christianization of the *Familia Caesaris*," Dimitris Kyrtatas' 1987 book–which was written as a dissertation under Keith Hopkins–argued that beginning with Paul, "Christianized imperial freedmen," helped "Christianity to penetrate the upper sections of Roman society; their proximity to the emperor could influence his attitude and therefore affect Christian-state relations; Christianity, finally, could make use of the network which connected Rome to almost all parts of the empire."[52]

Kyrtatas then explains that "[Christianity] advanced steadily, and more or less smoothly to positions of power," and "the continuous influence of Christianity in some sections of the imperial administration" allowed "the new religion" to "influence public affairs and sometimes emperors themselves."[53] And in the following centuries, "Christians associated with the emperor's household did not lose the privileged position they had in the days of Paul," but "increased in numbers, and from their ranks leading members of the Christian communities were drawn."[54]

Finally, Kyrtatas summarizes: "Christians realized early that the decisive factor in

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socially in the pre-Constantinian empire, gradually gaining influence in some of the more important social networks"(Harland 2002: 397, my emphasis, citing Weaver 1967, 1972 and Finn 1982).

[51] Finn 2002: 298-99.

[52] Kyrtatas 1987: 78.

[53] Kyrtatas 1987: 83.

[54] Kyrtatas 1987: 85.

their struggle would be the conversion of the emperor; and who could influence an emperor more easily than his domestics and ministers?"[55] Apparently no one, because, Kyrtatas concludes, "as Weaver has demonstrated, 'As *a group* the *Familia Caesaris* constitutes one of the most notably 'unstable' [i.e. upwardly mobile] elements in imperial society.'"[56]

Finn and Kyrtatas reiterated the synecdochic connection between the *familia Caesaris* and individual Christian members of it, and the metonymic connection between Christian *familia Caesaris* members and the whole community.[57] But they also added a long-standing tenet, which presupposed that individual Christians in the *familia Caesaris* were carriers and transmitters of a religion: Christianity. This is a metonymic exchange whereby individual persons of the *familia Caesaris* are "containers" that represent the contained (Christianity). And like contagion, individual Christians in the *familia Caesaris* moved about, proselytized, and Christianity spread horizontally and vertically. Harnack's program was reincarnated.[58] This is too simplistic, as most would now agree. It gives too little thought to the complex social processes involved and treats Christianity as an ontological entity.

Unfortunately, the temptation to project "Christianity" through individual Christians in the *familia Caesaris* is deep-rooted. Paul's reference to *familia Caesaris* (οἱ

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[55] Kyrtatas 1987: 86.
[56] Kyrtatas 1987: 86 and n, 27 cited as Weaver 1967: 123. The correct citation is Weaver 1967: 5. Emphasis mine.
[57] See Holmberg 1990: 21.
[58] For discussion see White 1985/86: 100. Finn and Kyrtatas were working in what Smith called the "social organization of early Christianity, in terms of both the social forces which led to the rise of Christianity and the social institutions of early Christianity" (Smith 1975: 20).

ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας) in Phil 4:22, for instance, seems to naturally connect with the later period when Christians were apparently still in 'the' *familia Caesaris* and "Christianity" was growing in prominence. Meeks slips into this too. The preciousness of Phil 4:22 is that some members of the *familia Caesaris* were "initiated into Christianity *at so early a date*."[59] Using the *familia Caesaris* of Phil 4:22 Meeks was looking at "Christianity" beyond Phil 4:22.

On the one hand, then, it is probably true that many interpretations have at times fallen into what Steven Friesen dubbed a "modern, Western, male fascination with upward mobility, and a determination to find signs of wealth in the early churches."[60] But on the other hand, the problem is derivative. What entitled some scholars to continually make fraught associations between Christians and the *familia Caesaris* was, among other things, an elite location and an aggressive model of social mobility in the *familia Caesaris*. Both were inherited primarily from Weaver's widely read book. There are problems with Weaver's model, however, and we need to assess those problems and consider the prospects before turning to a re-description of his *familia Caesaris*.

WEAVER'S *FAMILIA CAESARIS*: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

The only book on imperial slaves and freedmen published in English–the only one I am aware of, at least–is Weaver's classic.[61] It was published over forty years ago (1972). The

[59] Meeks 2003: 63. My emphasis.
[60] Friesen 2010: 235. See also Countryman 1980: 24.
[61] Although, see now Rose MacLean's forthcoming book *Freed Slaves and Roman Imperial Culture*, p. 96-133, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

last true monograph on imperial slaves and freedmen was Boulvert's second volume *Domestique et fonctionnaire sous le Haut-Empire romain*. It was published in 1974. While there have been articles and chapters on the subject since, there has not been a sustained study of imperial slaves, freedmen, or the *familia Caesaris* since the late 1970s.[62] I have no plans to fill this gaping lacuna here. The point is that what we know as the *familia Caesaris* had already taken its enduring shape by the late 1970s. Consequently, the formative studies on the subject missed two important developments.

The first miss was the study of the "epigraphic habit," which began with Ramsay MacMullen's groundbreaking 1982 article.[63] This methodological trend investigated why individuals and groups commemorated themselves and others on stones in the first place. Most significant were the reading strategies that these studies brought to bear on inscriptions. Rather than literal readings the new approaches tried to uncover particular cultural practices embedded in the stones.[64] The focus also shifted to understanding monumental contexts, especially for funerary epigraphy. And notably, the new methods differed from earlier studies' like Weaver's that used nomenclature analysis or age distributions to construct social or demographic models.[65]

Insights from these epigraphic studies change how we read epitaphs of imperial slaves or freedpersons. The inscriptions were not simply texts conveying straightforward,

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[62] As far as I know, David Alan Nichols' 1978 dissertation at the University of Cincinnati under the direction of Archie J. Christopherson was the last major work.
[63] MacMullen 1982 coined the term.
[64] Mouritsen 2005: 38.
[65] Saller and Shaw 1984: 125.

official, or legal information to be charted and ordered. The inscriptions were formulated for a variety of reasons, and concerned with audience reception;[66] moral and legal expectations between the deceased and living, and expressions of Romanness;[67] preservation of identities, the assertion of places in Roman society, the avoidance of complete oblivion after death;[68] and social and family relationships (kinship, heirship, friendship, etc.).[69]

The second miss, related to the first, was Roman social history. This subfield only began to take off in the 1970s,[70] and included, among a plethora of intellectual options, demography, living conditions, family and slavery. Studies of slavery led the way, in fact.[71] But it was too late to produce a different picture of the *familia Caesaris*. Instead, some prime works of social history–MacMullen's *Social Relations* (1974) and Alföldy's *Social History of Rome* (1975)–incorporated the *familia Caesaris* as it already was according to Weaver and Boulvert. Thus, the political-administrative categorization of imperial slaves and freedpersons was, for the most part, ossified. Two influential works on slavery published in the following decade, Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* (1982), and Keith Bradley's *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire* (1984), then propagated Weaver's ideas.[72] Bradley's work, for example, deliberately leaves out

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[66] MacMullen 1982: 233-46.
[67] Meyer 1990. More recently, Meyer 2011.
[68] Woolf 1996: 29.
[69] Saller and Shaw 1984: 125-26; Saller 2001; Mouritsen 2005: 61.
[70] Peachin 2011: 3-13. See the important article by Treggiari 1975.
[71] Treggiari 2002: 10; Parkin and Pomeroy 2007: 1.
[72] Patterson 1982: 248. More generally, Patterson 1982: 300-303.

imperial slaves in large part because they supposedly "constituted a particularly distinct status group,"[73] while Patterson, who defined *familia Caesaris* as slavery, could still depict an "*ordo* of the *familia Caesaris*," a "self-perpetuating order," "tightly knit" and "highly efficient."[74] And despite all the work on slaves and freedpersons since Weaver's book–including Susan Treggiari's excellent articles on the "Domestic Staff at Rome" (1973) and "Jobs in the Household of Livia" (1975)–it is only within the last few years that the picture of the emperors' slaves and freedpersons has slowly begun to change.[75]

Moses Finley, on the other hand, who took an "unusually keen and stimulating interest" in Weaver's 1972 project,[76] conceived of imperial slaves and freedpersons quite differently from Weaver. Within the Marxist analysis of his magisterial *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (1980), Finley defined slavery as a concept of labor and the emperor's slaves and former slaves as the "involuntary labour" required to run a viable economy and society.[77] As such, the comparanda for "the so-called *familia Caesaris*"[78]

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[73] Bradley 1987: 16, n.16.
[74] Patterson 1982: 303.
[75] I should point out here that two early review articles raised serious concerns about Weaver and Boulvert's work. The first was John D'Arms 1975 review, which was receptive of Weaver's book but quite critical on some of its most significant conclusions. The issues D'Arms raised concerned the methodology Weaver deployed. Second, Graham Burton's 1977 article "Slaves, Freedmen and Monarchy" primarily critiqued Boulvert's second volume. But as he flags the issues that accompanied studying imperial slaves and freedmen more generally, he also notes that "there are methodological problems" with Weaver's *Familia Caesaris* (1972), "especially about the typicality of the samples which are analysed" (1977: 164). By comparison, Lauren Pedersen's more recent work on freedmen (2011)–though principally art historical–hardly breaches the subject of imperial freedmen, but when it does it cites Weaver's 1972 book and 1967 article as the authority (2011: 195, n.34). Conversely, Henrik Mouritsen's more recent book on freedmen in the Roman world (2011) diverges from Weaver's findings at crucial points, e.g. manumission (2011: 132-5). See discussion below.
[76] Weaver 1972: x.
[77] Finley 1980: 77, 40.
[78] Finley's quotation marks (1980: 39).

were various labor types and slave groups. The picture would look very different today had Weaver or Boulvert analyzed the data with Finley's categories.

Nonetheless, the wave of new studies on slaves and freedpersons in the Roman world can help reframe the conventional understanding of the *familia Caesaris*. While taking up many of the older questions about slavery that Finley presented in 1980–demography, slave's location in the economy, work and labor power–the newer works feature the social, ideological, and cultural bases and ramifications of Roman slavery, as well as their intersections with status and honor.[79] Equally important, current studies recast our understanding of slave (and free) work as a social relationship–one of domination–and so move the heuristic out of the purely economic realm.[80] Thus, with these two field changes in mind–epigraphic habit and social studies of slavery–let us briefly examine two broad problem areas in Weaver's formulations.

Hierarchy

Weaver packaged all the emperor's slaves and freedmen in one hierarchical, two-branch system which he called the *familia Caesaris*. Yet, the case for a fully-fledged hierarchy of posts and of a career structure in either "branch" is quite weak. From more than 4,000 inscriptions there are only forty-eight examples of an imperial slave or freedman holding more than one post in succession. So, as Graham Burton critiqued, either an epigraphic practice developed that systematically omitted references to previous "posts" in the

[79] Meyer 2012/2013: 239.
[80] Meyer 2012/ 2013: 243-4.

occupational hierarchy (as was so important in the elite *cursus honorum*), or we must assume that in the majority of cases, where only one post is mentioned, this was the position held most recently and at the time of death.[81] Burton suggested that the older view of Otto Hirschfeld may be correct, that many imperial slaves and freedmen only ever held a single post, and those who had several did not do so according to fixed rules.[82] Though he agreed that Boulvert went too far in his description, Weaver's 1980 article on "Two Freedman Careers" disagreed with Burton's interpretation. Weaver argued it was too strict. He conceded that Hirschfeld's point may have been true for a provincial center like Carthage but not necessarily for Rome where posts (*officia*) were larger, more specialized or "thicker on the ground."[83] Weaver then discusses two imperial freedmen inscriptions–those of Paean and Classicus–[84]that he thinks show "a clearly perceivable freedman *cursus*."[85]

But this could not resolve the systemic and methodological problems. Even when an imperial freedman inscription lists a series of "posts" it is not always explicit in what order the posts were held, and, strikingly, no ancient descriptions of careers or of rules for careers in the *familia Caesaris* exists.[86] To remedy that problem Weaver and Boulvert

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[81] Burton 1977: 163. And out of the total pool of imperial personnel epigraphy the vast majority of datable items comes after Augustus (Weaver 1972: 301).
[82] Burton 1977: 164; Hirschfeld 1905: 429-30.
[83] Weaver 1980: 144. For his part, Weaver was arguing against some of the earlier treatments of imperial administration that thought below the fervid movement of equestrians at the top, there was a static substratum of imperial slaves and freedmen providing merely stability and continuity (Weaver 1972: 224, n.1).
[84] Paean: *CIL* 14.2932; Classicus: *AE* 1972, 574.
[85] Weaver 1980: 155.
[86] For examples of "careers" see Weaver 1980: 145, n.9. and Boulvert 1981.

(1970), had looked to H.G. Pflaum's study of the equestrians.[87] Using equestrian careers as the model they then filled in the gaps for imperial slaves and freedmen careers while placing them in an elite Roman strata alongside the equestrian *ordo*.[88] But this, too, is contrived.

The so-called "*cursus* inscriptions"–whether for an imperial freedman or an equestrian–are subjective artworks. As Alison Cooley warns, far from offering objective datasets revealing typical career patterns of officials, which in turn may illuminate the workings of Roman government administration, what they reveal is how individuals want to be remembered.[89] And despite the inscriptions there was in fact no *fixed* career pattern for equestrians; the *equites*, more likely, were imitating the career patterns that senators presented, and trying to create an impression that they were as valuable to the state.[90] Just so, the *cursus* inscription of an imperial freedman is like a wraith of the actual person.[91] The formal title Weaver used to describe the imperial slaves and freedmen as a second order aristocracy like the equestrians–the *ordo libertorum et servorum principis*–is also a gross fabrication. No such description exists in the ancient world.

Moreover, the occupational "nomenclature" on inscriptions that Weaver systematized had more to do with the "Roman mania for classifying property" than any

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[87] Boulvert 1970: 5.
[88] Weaver 1972: 12. Burton 1977: 163; see also Fabre 1992: 124. Though their precise working relationship has been debated, the introduction of equestrian administrators was a slow and gradual process, not fully completed until the reign of Hadrian (Mouritsen 2011: 97). Imperial freedmen procurators and equestrians could work together to administer the provinces. See Bruun 1990.
[89] Cooley 2012: 227.
[90] Cooley 2012: 228.
[91] Wallace-Hadrill 1996: 298.

official career hierarchy. Any occupational designation was rare in that it identified a particular slave from a mass of other slaves who probably received no such classification.[92] Job titles also enabled slave-owners or managers to extract the greatest possible productivity from a workforce with no inherent incentive to perform.[93] For their part, the enslaved or their commemorators would respond with epigraphy that tended to be positive, highlighting their work as a form of identity, to memorialize the prestige of an individual and his/her family, and to perhaps celebrate or magnify their experiences (e.g. "careers"). [94]

Although hierarchical and bureaucratic functions for imperial slaves and freedpersons developed over time–as Weaver and others rightly recognized–[95] at no point are we dealing with administrative departments in the modern sense, or with formalized career structures.[96] A bureaucracy proper occurred first in late antiquity, and then only with free personnel.[97] Imperial slaves or freedpersons were thus more like the brokers and beneficiaries within a complex and shifting network of imperial patronage that Andrew

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[92] Bodel 2011: 321-22.
[93] Bodel 2011: 321, 324. The extreme levels of specificity for imperial slaves' tasks, e.g. name-caller (*nomenclator*), seem not to be concentrated in areas where the need for specialized skills or close oversight of performance was greatest (Bodel 2011: 324).
[94] As Sandra Joshel remarks: "Lacking a heritage, socially acknowledged kin, a place in the social order, and even names of their own, slaves did have their work, even if that labor and its products were in another's control. In this light, slaves' use of occupational title stems from the poverty of their social position" (1992: 55).
[95] Weaver 1972: 45-6; Fabre 1992: 123.
[96] Mouritsen 2011: 94; Millar 1977: 73-8; Bodel 2011: 330; Wallace-Hadrill 1996: 298.
[97] Herrmann-Otto 2009: 179, n.94.

Wallace-Hadrill describes, and less like a "ramifying secretariat" with hierarchical bureaus.[98]

Furthermore, we must think of the emperor's slaves and freedpersons like the slaves and freedpersons in other aristocratic households. Even as bureaucratic changes occurred over two and a half centuries,[99] imperial slaves and freedpersons never lost the basic character of being slaves and freedpersons. The idea that from the beginning Augustus engineered the *familia Caesaris* as an institutional juggernaut is too much historians' hindsight.[100] Imperial slaves and freedpersons always had a double-function as both part of the emperor's personal assets (*privatus*) and public workers of the *res publica*. And the power of imperial slaves or freedmen, as Burton observed, depended not on the duties inherent in their posts, but on their relationship to the emperor, and this was true whether in the late-second or in the mid-first century. When imperial slaves or freedmen performed public administrative duties in Rome or in the provinces, they

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[98] Wallace-Hadrill 1996: 297. Similar comments in Malina 2001: 75.

[99] Wallace-Hadrill uses the phrase "bloated servile households" of Rome's aristocracy (1996: 297). See also Mouritsen 2011: 94; Panciera 2007: 60. There has been debate over whether the *familia Caesaris* of the early empire was more like the administration of a Hellenistic-style royal court (*aula*) or the private domestic staff of an aristocratic *domus*. For the particulars see Winterling 1999: 12-38; 195-203. The majority opinion seems to be that the *familia Caesaris* developed as an aristocratic household; Schumacher 2001: 331-335; Herrmann-Otto 2009: 178. As Pavis D'Escurac comments, the introduction of an imperial regime to Rome was not immediately accompanied by the installation of a royal palace, a court, a complex etiquette, and an innumerable domestic staff. Only in time did the palatine become the imperial hill par excellence (1987: 393-94).

[100] See e.g. Eck (1983: 5-6) who suggests that the (social) disparity of imperial freedmen power "was developed" or "was created" (entstanden war) "in the socio-political arrangement" to which Augustus refers in *Res Gestae* 34. This is not to say that the first *princeps* had no impact for imperial slaves and freedmen. On the contrary, he set irreversible precedents with his (and others') slaves and freedpersons in the Roman Empire. It is true that certain imperial freedmen owed their status to emperors' political craftiness, though how useful this is for understanding the majority of imperial personnel remains to be seen.

remained the emperor's personal (*privatus*) slaves or freedmen–however removed from his person–and dependent on him as their master or patron.[101]

Finally, there was a natural hierarchy for imperial slaves and freedpersons pertaining to labor type, whether administrative or domestic–if we want to keep Weaver's loose divisions. But this was expected for any large slave group, whether in Rome's aristocratic households, or on an American antebellum planation.[102] The point is that a variety of hierarchies–social, ethnic, and occupational–developed over time from a combination of both internal and external forces acting upon social relations within the community. Most importantly, these hierarchies evolved from experiences of and varying accommodations to *slavery*.[103]

Social Mobility

It is clear that imperial slaves and freedpersons could be socially mobile. The issue is how to understand the phenomenon and to explain accurately how individual slaves and freedpersons bettered themselves. Weaver's *familia Caesaris* was ensconced in the higher levels of Roman society–the aristocracy and equestrians were his comparanda–so social mobility within the *familia Caesaris* was part and parcel of Roman bureaucracy, administration, and hierarchy. The "indices of power" and mobility in his *familia*

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[101] Herrmann-Otto 2009: 178. Burton also points out that there could be no family dynasties of freedmen posts because their sons were free men and citizens. Upward social mobility into the free classes was limited if their wives were slaves or if their children were born before the freedman-fathers were manumitted. Thus Burton concludes that there is little reason to believe the corps of imperial slaves and freedmen ever developed into a bureaucracy proper. Instead, they probably retained most of the indices of patrimonial administration operating as an extension of the ruler's household (1977: 164).
[102] Bodel 2011: 323-24.
[103] Gomez 1998: 4, 227.

Caesaris were consequently mechanical, and reflected a Roman society that was rigidly ordered (i.e. *ordines*).[104] Notably, Weaver modeled his social mobility for imperial freedmen and slaves on Hopkins' model of elite mobility. This was a momentous and contentious methodological decision.[105] By adopting Hopkins' model Weaver already assumed a very high ceiling for imperial slaves and freedmen, and the path from imperial slave to provincial procurator then appeared shorter and smoother than it really was.

Again, there could be social mobility for imperial personnel. Sometimes it was dazzling. It always had limits, though, and was never equitable. Even Weaver's social mobility program for the *familia Caesaris* makes limitations that often go unnoticed. Within his "occupational hierarchy" of "the emperor's service," for example, Weaver delineates some "posts" (e.g. couriers) in which there was no expectation for further advancement.[106] He also notes that for such clerical and sub-clerical "grades" the position recorded on inscriptions (e.g. record-keeper, *tabularius*) is "the highest post actually reached by the *end* of a career."[107] To give an example, then, a fragmentary Latin inscription found south of Corinth's agora records that a certain Gaius Julius Epagathus was freedman of the emperor, and a courier (*tabellarius*) or a bookkeeper (*tabularius*) depending on the restoration.[108] He was a lower-level clerical worker most likely in

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[104] Burton's phrase (1977: 164). Think of Alföldy's social stratigraphy, for instance. See Stegemann and Stegemann 1999 [1995]: 60-65.
[105] Weaver 1967; Hopkins 1965. For Hopkins, elite social mobility was "a process of status inconsistency."
[106]Weaver 1972: 227; D'Arms 1975: 338.
[107] Weaver 1972: 224.
[108] [C. Julius, Aug. l.,] Epagathus [tabellariu]s Augusti (*Corinth* 8,2 76) West's reconstruction is most likely correct given the space on the left and the use of *Augusti*, which typically indicates a freedman. See discussion of nomenclature below.

Corinth's records depot (*tabularium*).[109] A second Latin inscription for Epagathus found in the neighboring town of Sicyon reads: "For Gaius Julius Epagathus, a freedman of the emperor. Ithacus his friend (made this)."[110] It is not clear whether the inscription from Corinth predates the inscription from Sicyon or vice-versa. But Ithacus honored his friend Epagathus for his defining 'career achievement:' that is, being manumitted as a freedman of the emperor. Based on Weaver's own estimations of the demographics and bureaucratic wheels of the *familia Caesaris*, it is unlikely that Epagathus, who already had a lower-level post, would have advanced farther in the system. This matches the overall epigraphic profile.

The preponderance of the epigraphic evidence is for persons like Epagathus who were still near the bottom or entry-level of the so-called bureaucracy.[111] Because many of these persons were the slave system's more skilled laborers–couriers (*tabellarius*/ ταβελλάριος), assistants (*adiutor*/ βοηθός), bookkeepers (*tabularius*/ ταβλάριος), record-keepers (*commentarius*) or tax-collectors (*exactor*)–they were deemed worthy of an occupational designation and epitaph in the first place.[112] Less skilled laborers, whether in Rome or the provinces, were much less likely to advance and thus usually less likely to leave material record of themselves or their family. So, yes, the inscriptions sometimes

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[109] The Southeast Building at Corinth is generally considered to function as such. For bibliography and discussion see White 2005.
[110] C(aio) Iulio Aug(us)ti l(iberto) Epagatho Ithacus amicus (*AE* 1977, 779).
[111] Weaver 1972: 224, 227; Bodel 2011: 330.
[112] Bodel 2011: 326-7.

record upward mobility, but they record *mobility that had already occurred*. New, or higher opportunities within the administration were not automatically accessible.

The sheer numbers of imperial slaves and freedpersons–soaring easily into the tens of thousands–the finite number of offices (*officia*/ ὀπίκια), and the rather short average life-expectancy could make upward mobility a veritable rat race. In chapter three we will take a more intimate look at some of the duties that could enhance an imperial slaves' prospects. But for now to keep some perspective: the upper level, imperial freedmen bureaucrats were only a "tiny privileged minority" among the thousands of imperial slaves and freedmen who worked clerical tasks in cities, served in the imperial palaces and villas, or were attached to estates and properties in Italy or the provinces.[113] And whether in Rome or the provinces, the emperor was a distant potentate for the vast majority. What's more, imperial freedmen could have had hundreds of their own slaves whom the emperors would inherit upon the freedman's death–unless he manumitted them first. Even imperial slaves, depending on their position and circumstances, could have dozens of slaves who would by default belong to the emperors. This turnover must have also made mobility in the system all the more difficult–though not impossible.

As others have since noted, however, social mobility involved factors beyond the officially or legally defined orders in Roman society. Indeed, social network theory, for example, provides a framework for understanding how social mobility worked in lieu of

[113] Millar 1977: 69.

or in line with of a bureaucracy's offices and posts.[114] The earlier treatments of imperial slaves and freedpersons also rarely entertained the idea that upward social mobility could depend on nepotism, graft, whim or sexual favors as easily as on apprenticeships (*vicarii*) or training (*paedagogiae*).[115] Nor did they allow for demotion, downward mobility, or "social death" as a possibility.[116]

Additionally, marriage and manumission are crucial mechanisms for *familia Caesaris* upward social mobility as Weaver constructed it.[117] A clear sign of social or economic power, according to Weaver, is that imperial slaves and freedmen married freeborn wives.[118] The statics Weaver shapes are impressive–two-thirds or 64% of males in the *familia Caesaris*, whether slave or freed, married freeborn wives.[119] But the pool of inscriptions Weaver collects shows 87% of recorded wives of imperial slaves and 89% of recorded wives of freedmen are without status indication. This is a scenario Weaver labels in his charts as "uncertain" (*incertae*).[120] In absolute numbers rather than percentages, for example, 681 out of a total of 794 inscriptions documenting the wives of imperial freedmen, are labelled *incertae*. In order for Weaver to estimate such high percentages of intermarriage among the *familia Caesaris*, therefore, he had to assume that

[114] Harland 2002: 396; White 1992.
[115] Burton 1977: 164.
[116] Patterson 1982.
[117] Treggiari 1974: 234.
[118] Meeks 2003: 22; Jeffers 1991: 30.
[119] Weaver 1972: 131, 136.
[120] Weaver 1972: 112.

when a wife's identification had both *nomen* (*gens*) and *cognomen*, but was without other status indication, she was a freeborn woman.

Yet, as John D'Arms critiqued, this methodology based almost entirely upon the names (*nomina*) is tenuous.[121] An inscription from Puteoli records, for example, that a certain Eria Veneria set up an epitaph for herself and her husband Aegialis, an imperial slave (*Caesaris servus*).[122] The appearance of her *nomen* and *cognomen* by itself affords no basis for determining whether Veneria was a freeborn (*ingenua*) woman, or the former slave of some local named (H)erius or (H)eria. Veneria was a common slave name, after all.[123] Another example from Rome records a certain Marcus Aurelius Alexander, an imperial freedmen and a "chief courier of the inheritance tax station," who set up a family epitaph (*titulus*) for himself, his son Donatus, and his wife Claudia Macaria.[124] Weaver assumes that Claudia Macaria is a freeborn woman. Yet, he also admits, she could also have been the former slave of a freeborn woman outside the imperial *familia*.[125] Moreover, D'Arms argues, if Weaver's theory of social improvement through marriage were correct, we ought not to find so many examples of highly placed imperial personnel

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[121] D'Arms 1975: 336-337.

[122] D(is) M(anibus) / Eria Veneria / sibi et Aegiali / Caesaris ser(vo) / coniugi b(ene) m(erenti) / h(oc) m(onumentum) s(ine) s(epulcrum) h(eredem) n(on) s(equetur) (*AE* 1974, 252)

[123] D'Arms 1975: 337, n.2.

[124] D(is) M(anibus) / M(arcus) Aur(elius) Aug(usti) lib(ertus) Alexander / p(rae)p(ositus) tabell(ariorum) st(ationis) XX her(editatium) fecit Dona/to filio dulcissimo et sibi / et suis Claudiae Maca/riae coniugi sanctis(s)imae / et libert(is) libert(abusque) poster(isque) eorum (*CIL* 6.8445)

[125] Weaver 1972: 154. Wives who bore non-imperial *nomina* and *cognomina* present similar problems of identifying status since it is unclear from whom they derived their names.

marrying their slaves.[126] So the *incertae* category that Weaver uses may be a helpful guide for reconstructing the status of wives in individual cases, in a small corpus, or at a more micro-level. But the point is that one cannot know whether a woman was freeborn or freed based solely on her *nomina*. Thus, it seems precarious that one of Weaver's most significant conclusions about social mobility in the *familia Caesaris* is essentially 90% uncertain (*incertae*).

If marrying a freeborn woman was a mark of personal socio-economic status for an imperial slave or freedman, then manumission, according to Weaver, was the pivotal event in an imperial slave's "career," the rung to more powerful posts up the occupational ladder. Manumission, Weaver asserts, was an "expectation" for imperial slaves, who could purchase their freedom from their savings (*peculium*) at age thirty.[127] To show how this expectation was realized, Weaver first charts a corpus of some 600 inscriptions recording the age at death of imperial freedmen. In the vast majority of cases he is thirty or older. Weaver then points to the existence of a "special branch" of the *fiscus*, the *fiscus libertatis et peculiorum*, into which, he suggests, the imperial slave deposited from her/his "savings" (*peculium*) her/his redemption price.[128] The idea for this special branch derives from an earlier 1949 essay of Weaver's mentor A.H.M. Jones, which prompted

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[126] D'Arms 1975: 337, n.2. The example D'Arms cites is Herculi et S<y>lvano ex voto Trophimianus / Aug(usti) lib(ertus) proc(urator) summi choragi / cum Chia coniuge (*CIL* 6.297). D'Arms seems to think that the occurrence of single names (e.g. Chia) indicates slave status. This may not be the case, but the numerous occurrences of such examples does illustrate that the lack of *nomina* is suggestive. It also shows how difficult it is to make a programmatic case for social mobility using nomenclature from inscriptions. For another example of an imperial freedman taking (most likely) a slave wife (*contubernalis*) see *CIL* 14.524.

[127] Weaver 1972: 99-100, 103.

[128] Weaver 1972: 100.

Weaver's book, in fact. Jones described this *fiscus*, apparently begun under Claudius, as one of the emperor's personal accounts, which accrued the slaves that others in his *familia* owned, as well as the property of his defunct slaves. Jones then cites two inscriptions, both from Rome, that mention this *fiscus* (*CIL* 6.8450 and *ILS* 1522), and declares: "*libertatis* in this context meant the sums paid for their freedom by imperial slaves."[129] Jones defended the suggestion by claiming that it was normal in the ancient world for slaves to purchase manumission, and that in such a huge *familia*, these payments must have been a regular and sizeable source of income.[130]

Though all this sounds reasonable enough it is difficult to maintain. The manumission process that Weaver and Jones reconstruct, for example, is tautological: the view that slaves purchase manumission from their *peculium* explains the *fiscus*, and the *fiscus* then confirms this manumission process. Weaver's explanation is also conspicuously lacking detail. He provides almost no specific information about manumission, nor any document or inscription that relates the methods (e.g. *manumissio ex testamento*). Weaver (and Jones) looked to the legal digests to supply his explanation,

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[129] Jones 1949: 43. First inscription: D(is) M(anibus) / T(ito) Ael(io) Augg(ustorum) lib(erto) Saturnin(o) / pr[oc(uratori) provinc(iae)] Belgicae / [3] proc(uratori) / fisci libertatis et peculior(um) / tabul(ario) a rationibus / tabul(ario) Ostis ad annona(m) (*CIL* 6. 8450=*ILS* 1521). If we take Weaver's nomenclature and chronology, the *terminus post quem* for this is 161-69 CE when Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus were joint-emperors ("Augg."). The second inscription: Terrae matri Gratus Aug(usti) lib(ertus) tab(ularius) f(isci) lib(ertatis) et pec(uliorum) d(onum) d(edit) (*CIL* 6.772=*ILS* 1522). Date is unknown, probably before 160 CE. A third that Jones does not cite is Matia Terti [..] / Ti(berio) Claudio Aug(usti) [lib(erto)] / Primiano tabula[r(io) f(isci) lib(ertatis)] / et peculiorum […] / et suis libertis [dumtaxat] / eos quos in testa[mento meo] / [n]ominavero post[erisque eor(um)] (*CIL* 6.8450a).
[130] Jones 1949: 43-4.

but the digests do not discuss manumission of imperial slaves![131] So Weaver can muster only a seven-page, statistical chapter on the decisive moment in *familia Caesaris* upward social mobility. His fullest explanation reads simply: "Manumission of those who were 30 and over would be a more routine matter, again probably handled by a department of the central administration, according to more standardised procedures, perhaps on an annual basis, and in the financial interests of the *fiscus*."[132] This explanation assumes quite a bit.

In reality Weaver's charts of imperial freedmen show not how manumission operated, or the expectation for when it happened, but the ages (at death) of the imperial freedmen who had already been manumitted.[133] Without any secure archaeological context for his material–only "larger samples of disparate epigraphic evidence"–his figures lack historical weight.[134] Still, Weaver's charts reveal constructive information, even if it not what he intended. Taking age thirty as the manumission bar, for example, the bulk of Weaver's total sample (305 out of 440) died just on either side of it (between ages twenty-five and thirty-four). This rather bleak datum means that these imperial

[131] Weaver notes the closest we get is Ulpian 1.12, which reads "ideo sine consilio manumissum Caesaris servum manere putat," but "Caesaris" makes no sense and "servum manere" cannot be right (1972: 97, n.3). For later treatments of manumission in the *familia Caesaris* see Fabre 1992: 134-41, who provides more detail.
[132] Weaver 1972: 101.
[133] Deducing manumission rates from the post-manumission, freedman epitaph has been a common and fraught method. See e.g. Alföldy 1972 and critique by Wiedemann 1985.
[134] Mouritsen 2013: 52.

slaves were manumitted towards the end of their typically short lives.[135] There also could have been other reasons for recording age at death that have little to do with manumission: the stones commemorated exceptionally long lives. Twenty of Weaver's examples record persons who died between ages eighty and one-hundred, for example.

Suffice it to say, questions abound: Was the special account (*fiscus*) uniformly operative across the empire, i.e. not just in Rome? Was it consistent or intermittent over time? Why are there so few inscriptions? And, more perplexing, if slaves in the *familia Caesaris* purchased their freedom, or bought out their service contract so to speak, how would they know the amount to pay for their redemption price, including the 5% manumission tax (*vicesima libertatis*) on the slave's value? There were no maximal prices on slaves until Diocletian's Edict in 301 CE, and since these were not absolute figures, there was still variation as before.[136] The majority of imperial slaves certainly could not ask their owner about their price, not least since the emperor only rarely was "reduced to buying slaves" off the trading block anyway, according to Jones and Weaver.[137]

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[135] Weaver 1972: 103. Death is a crucial demographic fact vis-à-vis material culture and commemoration from or for imperial personnel. See chapter 3. There are also cases in which imperial slaves died at ripe old ages but were never manumitted: *CIL* 8.12597 and *CIL* 8.12641.

[136] Rees 2004: 42; on examples of slave prices see Duncan-Jones 1982: 348-350

[137] Jones 1949: 43; Weaver 2004: 197-98. This does not seem to be the case. Elisabeth Herrmann-Otto has suggested that imperial slaves (*Staatssklaven*) would mainly be bought from the free market, attained through the confiscation of private assets and remain as imperial slaves (Herrmann-Otto 2009: 179). In the early *principate* the emperor enslaved freeborn persons (*ingenuae*) as prisoners of war; later emperors inherited these slaves (and freedpersons) from previous emperor(s); the emperor received slaves as gifts; and overall, imperial slaves, probably the majority in Weaver's view, were born into slavery (*vernae*), with the number of *vernae* increasing over time.

For Roman social historians, calculating the expectations and regularity of manumission has been a perpetual problem.[138] Some now argue that in the Roman system, at least, a slave purchasing freedom from his/her 'savings' was more the exception than the rule because purchase ostensibly severed the continuing social ties expected between the freedperson and his/her patron.[139] According to a study of manumission among the aristocratic Statilii and Volusii families, for example, Henrik Mouritsen concludes that the practice of manumission at the elite social level was not governed by any strict economic or managerial logic. Long-term sustainability of the household was also not a primary concern.[140] Freedom appears to have been granted without much regard for years of service or rank and responsibilities.

In fact, manumission practices resist any strict typologies: some slaves were selected for manumission (e.g. domestic staff in close contact with their owners);[141] some slaves in relatively trusted positions were not freed (e.g. slave managers–*vilici*, bookeepers– *tabularii*); and there seems to have been, Mouritsen perceives, an improvised, ad hoc, aspect to manumission, which paradoxically may have spurred slaves to hard work and obedience.[142] For the Statilii and Volusii, a quarter to a third of the

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[138] See n. 112 above. For recent discussion see Herrmann-Otto 2013 and Mouritsen 2013, Mouritsen 2011: 120-205.
[139] Mouritsen 2011: 160-79.
[140] Mouritsen 2013: 59-60.
[141] As John Bodel notes citing the jurist Gaius, the occupational designation attached to slaves could be merely one of several ways by which a slave destined for manumission by testament could be distinctively identified (Bodel 2011: 323; Gaius. *Dig*. 40.4.24).
[142] Mouritsen 2013: 61.

household was manumitted–a "strikingly high" rate.[143] All the same, this still leaves a large proportion enslaved. Manumission was common, but not universal. Many slaves never gained their freedom.[144] Finally, manumission did presuppose social mobility. But manumission did not inevitably metamorphose into social or economic power. Both depended on the particular situation in which the slave was caught, and on any number of other factors that the slave may or may not have been able to control.

The extent to which these comparisons can flesh out the issue for imperial slaves and freedpersons must wait for another study. Yet, if the emperors shared an aristocratic ideology with other elite slave owners–which is probably the right idea–and if imperial slaves and freedpersons shared an experience with other slaves and freedpersons–which must be the right idea–then we at least have some intelligence with which to work. As we will see in the final section, moreover, there is much to gain by comparing imperial personnel with other sub-elite groups in the Roman Empire.

Familia Caesaris: Towards a Re-Description

After describing the social status and mobility, the hierarchies and bureaucracy of this massive organization called the *familia Caesaris*, Weaver drops a stunning confession: "'Familia Caesaris,' in the general collective sense in which it is used throughout this study, does not occur in the ancient sources."[145] Instead, Weaver relates, the phrase

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[143] Mouritsen 2013: 53.
[144] Mouritsen 2013: 53.
[145] Weaver 1972: 299. As Weaver's friend and former colleague Graeme Clarke commented in Weaver's obituary: "It is indeed a field [Weaver] virtually created on his own (Clarke 2005b: 67). See the early

familia Caesaris refers "to a particular 'familia' or branch of the administration, and has a purely local significance."[146] To say this another way, placing all the emperor's slaves and freedmen together in a single unit called the *familia Caesaris* is entirely artificial. Indeed, what we know as "the *familia Caesaris*" is a modern construct that became a commonplace only after the publication of Weaver's book with the eponymous title.[147]

Even more significant, as Weaver also helps illuminate, *familia Caesaris* does not mean all the emperors slaves *and* freedmen. It means a specific group of the emperor's *slaves*–a *familia*–often living together in a particular area and carrying out a similar task. In the nomenclature of the imperial household "Caesaris" is particularly associated with slavery, Weaver notes, and especially in the Julio-Claudian period it is the characteristic form of indicating imperial slaves.[148] We know this because on inscriptions slaves tended to be described with '*Caesaris*' and freedpersons with '*Augusti*.'[149] This is not a hard and fast rule, of course, but the overall epigraphic trend is cogent. One succinct example is an epitaph from Rome on which a certain Alexander is recorded as a slave of Caesar (*Caesaris nostri servo*) in contrast to his brother Marcus Ulpius Spendo who is recorded as an imperial freedman (*Augusti libertus*).[150]

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comment by Treggiari that "the organization…Weaver conveniently calls the 'familia Caesaris' (a term not used, as he points out, in precisely this sense in the ancient sources)" (1974: 234).

[146] Weaver 1972: 299.

[147] Pavis D'Escurac 1987: 393. For purposes of description and generalization Weaver and others had also treated imperial *familia* as a single category. See Burton 1977: 164.

[148] Weaver 1972: 300, 52. M. Bang first made this distinction clear (Bang 1919: 174-186, and 176).

[149] Weaver 1972: 48.

[150] Dis Manib(us) / Alexandro / Caesaris n(ostri) ser(vo) / M(arcus) Ulpius Aug(usti) lib(ertus) / Spendo fratri suo / et Ulpia Successa pientes / semper mihi desiderantissimo / et Flaviae Zusae / b(ene) m(erenti) (*CIL* 6. 37958; *c*. 98-150 CE). Likewise from Rome: D(is) M(anibus) / Ulpiae Niceni / M(arcus) Ulpius

The distinction in nomenclature tends to hold true for Greek inscriptions as well.[151] The emperor's slaves are designated with Καίσαρος and the emperor's freedmen/ freedwomen with Σεβαστοῦ. A bilingual epitaph from the Athenian agora shows this plainly. On a statue base for his non-legal partner (*contubernalis*) Valeria Fortunata, an imperial house-born slave named Antiochus designates himself *Antiochus Caesaris nostri servus* in Latin and in Greek Ἀντίοχος Καίσαρος δοῦλος (Figure 3a and 3b).[152] The notion that *familia Caesaris* included freedmen thus obscures this distinctive usage. In reality, when "Caesaris" is joined with 'familia,' Weaver says, the phrase *familia Caesaris* "stresses" the slave origin of the individuals under discussion.[153] We know this because of broader epigraphic trends and literary references in which groups of slaves are designated simply as *familia* (See Figure 4).[154]

Aug(usti) lib(ertus) Cerdo / coniugi suae cum qua vix(it) / annis XXV item Antiochi/anus Caes(aris) n(ostri) servus mammu/lae suae de se bene meritae / fecerunt et sibi et suis libertis / libertabusque posterisque eorum (*AE* 1946, 140).

[151] Weaver 1972: 54.

[152] D(is) M(anibus) / Valeriae Fortunatae / contubernali b(ene) m(erenti) / Antiochus Caes(aris) n(o)s(tri) s(ervus) / vern(a) fecit // Οὐαλερίᾳ Φορτουνάτῃ / συμβίῳ / Ἀντίοχος Καίσ(αρος) δοῦλ(ος) / ἐποίησεν (*AE* 1947, 77= *SEG* 21, 1058). See also *SEG* 31, 1124 from Sebaste, Phrygia; *MAMA* 5.114 from Lysias, Phrygia; *MAMA* 1.29 from Laodicea.

[153] Weaver 1972: 300.

[154] In a functional respect, freed slaves could also be subsumed under the term *familia* (*CIL* 6.479, 8456; *Dig*. 50.16.195) but ordinarily, a differentiation was made between the *liberti* and the *familia servorum* (Schumacher 2011: 592).

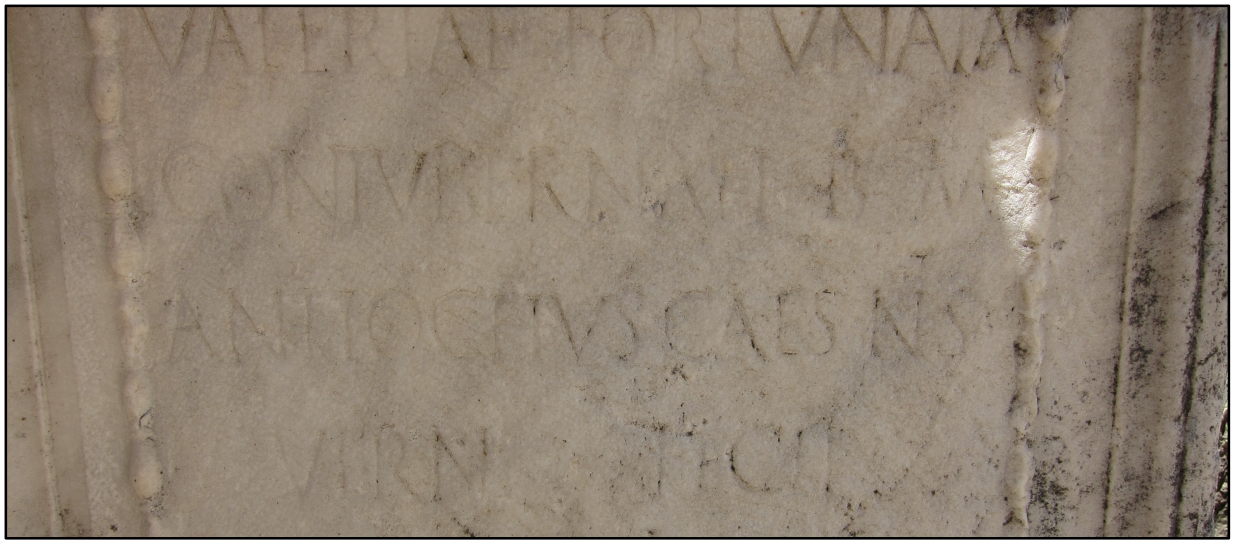

Figure 3a: Latin text for epitaph of Valeria Fortunata, showing designation for Imperial Slave Antiochus as *Caes(aris) N(ostri) S(ervus)* in line 3.

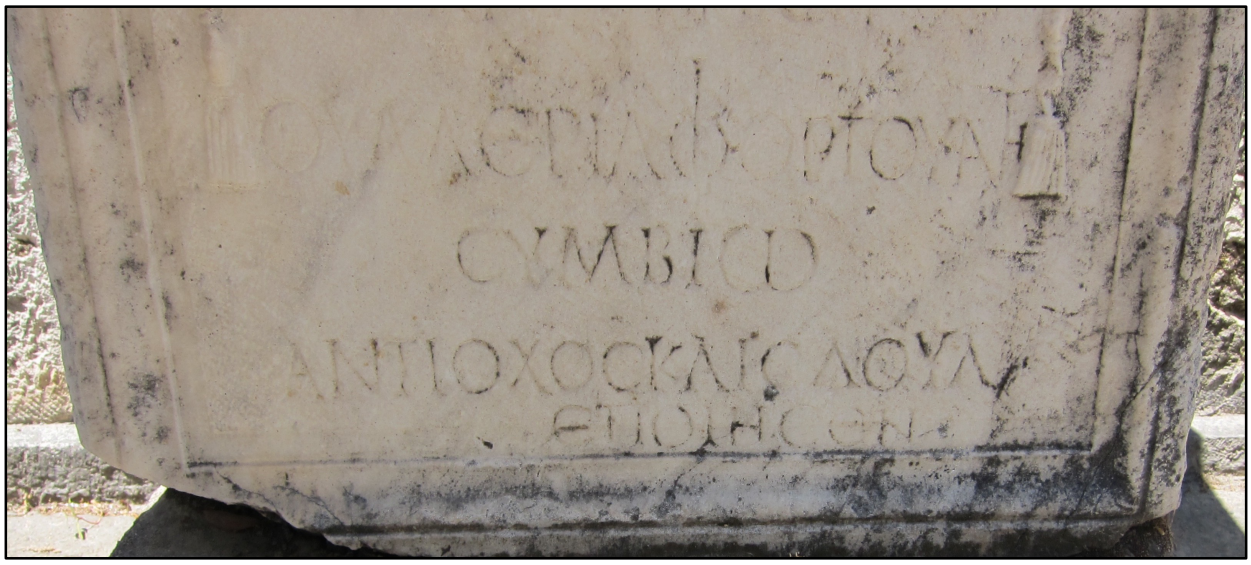

Figure 3b: Greek text of epitaph for Valeria Fortunata, showing designation for Imperial Slave Antiochus as Καισ(αρος) Δουλ(ος) in line 7.

Figure 4: The epitaph shows D(is) M(anibus) n(ostri) / Thelonicus Caesares XV / familia ei fecit bene / merenti (*CIL* 6.27350). Thelonicus was an imperial slave (*Caesar[i]s*) commemorated by his *familia*, in this case, likely his *familia gladitoria*. See Korhonen 2004: 233, no. 136.

On other inscriptions the slaves of a household are often differentiated from the freed in the same household by the phrase *familia et liberti* (See Figure 5).[155]

Figure 5: Inscription distinguishing the freedpersons (*liberti*) and slaves (*familia*) who honor a fellow-slave named Hilarus, a manager (*dispensator*) for Camillus, probably the owner of the 'familia' (*CIL* 6.9323).

[155] *CIL* 6.7395, 23548, 38711; *CIL* 8.12833; *CIL* 10.3995.

To particularize the slave group, sometimes these inscriptions record the owner of the slave 'family,' or specify the *familia* under local or functional aspects (See Figure 5). The group of slaves who worked in the city were the *familia urbana*,[156] the group who worked in the country were the *familia rustica*.[157] Likewise, we have evidence for an assortment of groups of slaves: those at camp (*familia castrensis*),[158] working in the mint (*familia monetalis*),[159] working with the manumission tax (*familia XX libertatis*),[160] working as gladiators (*familia gladitoria*).[161]Public slaves, those owned by cities and colonies, called themselves a *familia publica*,[162] sometimes further distinguishing their group from freedpersons with *liberti et familia publica*.[163] Thus, an inscription from Rome honoring the eternal imperial house and sacred Silvanus distinguishes also the emperor's freedperson and slave dedicators as "*liberti et familia Caesaris*."[164] Here again notice the distinction.

Classical authors, it seems, preferred the term *familia* for slaves,[165] and the only detailed ancient description of *familia Caesaris* follows suit. The late-first century curator of Rome's aqueducts (*curator aquarum*) Julius Sextus Frontinus (c. 40-104 CE) describes

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156 *CIL* 9.825; *AE* 1983, 300.
157 *CIL* 9.3028; *CIL* 8.5704 (*partially restored*).
158 *CIL* 6.8532; *CIL* 8.2702.
159 *CIL* 6.239.
160 *CIL* 5.3351.
161 *CIL* 5.8659; *CIL* 6.10170; *CIL* 10.1685
162 *CIL* 6.2342; *CIL* 14.255; *CIL* 14.32; *CIL* 2.7, 315; *CIL* 10.4856.
163 *CIL* 14.32 and *CIL* 9.32. See Schumacher 2011: 591.
164 In the ablative form in the inscription (*NSA* 1916, 395; *AE* 2007, 222).
165 E.g. Cato, *Agr*. 56-59; Cic. *Caec*. 55. *Dig*. 47.9.1; Schumacher 2011: 591. The etymology is helpful here. The term *famulus/a* means 'slave,' and is related to term *familia*.

the slave workers who maintain the city's water ducts as families. "There are two families," he says, "one belonging to the public, the other belonging to Caesar" (*Familiae sunt duae, altera publica, altera Caesaris*). Frontinus goes on to relate that this *familia Caesaris*–one to which he attempts to restore some discipline–numbered 460 and was first organized by Claudius when he brought his aqueduct (the Aqua Claudia) into the city a few generations earlier.[166]

Bear in mind that this *familia Caesaris* was non-existent until a certain task arose, at which point the emperor Claudius, or more likely his slave-managers, rounded up a group of his slaves to work on his project. Whether the "gang" of slaves called themselves a *familia Caesaris* is not clear, but by the late first century the new supervisor Frontinus could deem them such without needing to explain.[167] That "*Caesaris familia*" which Frontinus mentions, however, could not be the exact same as the one under Claudius. In the half-century interlude the family must have fluctuated, with some leaving due to deaths or different work assignments, others arriving as new work turned up.[168] Apparently, 460 was a large number (*amplum numerum*) for a family.[169]

Moreover, there could have been several families of Caesar's slaves that developed under Frontinus' watch. He reports, for instance, that both families (*publica* and *Caesaris*) are divided into "species of labor" (*ministeriorum species*): overseers,

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[166] Frontinus, *De aquaeductu* 116.
[167] An imperial official could have been responsible for this *familia Caesaris*, but it seems that here Frontinus is assuming control of both the *familia Caesaris* and the *familia publica* (Rodgers 2004: 298).
[168] According to one inscription from the time of Vespasian, for example, Claudius' aqueduct was out of order (*intermissas*) for nine years (*CIL* 6.1257).
[169] Frontinus, *De aquaeductu* 117.

reservoir-keepers, inspectors, pavers, plasterers, and other workmen.[170] Some of these slaves are stationed inside the city, and some outside, but each would have had a manager (*vilicus*) or a foreman (*praepositus*) over them. A *familia* could then identify themselves more particularly by their individual manager. This seems to have been the case for one slave group in Puteoli. A certain Julia Erotis, for example, is honored on an inscription by Mystis, a manager of imperial slaves (*Caesaris vilicus*), and by the family (*familia*) that worked under him.[171] In another case from Rutaeni in Gallia Aquitania (Modern Villefranche-de-Rouergue), one manager named Zmaragdus is honored by the *familia Caesaris* of Tiberius (*familia Tiberii Caesaris*) who worked at the mines, presumably also under Zmaragdus.[172] In other words, the "*familia*" designation signified those slaves who worked in a particular location, job, or function, not the whole labor system.

References to a particular *familia* of imperial slaves are not uncommon in inscriptions: we have slave groups working in military camps (*familia castrensis*),[173] in the mint (*familia monetalis*),[174] for the manumission tax (*familia XX libertatis*),[175] as gladiators or in gladiatorial shows (*familia gladiatorial Caesaris*),[176] and in the games

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[170] vilicos, castellarios, circitores, silicarios, tectores aliosque opifices (*De aquaeductu* 117).
[171] Iuliae Erotini / Mystis Caesaris vilic(us) / et familia quae sub eo est / ob meritis eius (*CIL* 10.1750 = *ILS* 7368).
[172] Zmaragdo vilico / quaest(ori) magistro / ex decurion(um) decr(eto) familiae Ti(beri) Cae[sa]ris / quae est in me[ta]llis (*CIL* 13.1550).
[173] *AE* 1914, 38. See especially *CIL* 6.8533, which also distinguished imperial slave and freed. Similarly, *CIL* 6.30911.
[174] *CIL* 6.239.
[175] *CIL* 5.3351.
[176] *CIL* 5.8659; *CIL* 6.1070; *CIL* 10.1685.

(*familia ludi magni*).[177] Again, we are dealing with tendencies and probabilities as we try to understand epigraphic terminology. But taken together the words '*familia*' and '*Caesaris*' strongly suggest a particular group of the emperor's slaves, less likely the imperial freed, and certainly not all the emperor's slaves and freedmen in an official civil service.

It is significant, though, that in almost every case the inscriptions do not simply preserve the phrase *familia Caesaris* as we have come to know it. Instead, they use *familia* in conjunction with the *work* done for the emperor (*Caesaris*).[178] The exact phrase *familia Caesaris* is actually quite rare. I have only been able to find two epigraphic examples. One from Rome I cited already as part of a dedication to the eternal imperial house and sacred Silvanus. The other inscription, interestingly enough, dates to the first century and comes from the Aegean rim. More precisely, the inscription comes from Coela, in Chersonesos Thracia (near modern Eceabat, Turkey). This is located on the Hellespont–the Gallipoli peninsula separating Asia and Europe–with the Aegean to the West and the Dardanelles Straits to the East. The inscription dates to the early Neronian period, 55 CE to be precise. It reads:

> For the divinity of the imperial house. Tiberius Claudius Faustus Reginus and Claudia Nais, (wife) of Faustus, with their own money made the bath for the people (*populo*) and for the family of our Caesar (*familiai Caesaris nostri*), and

[177] *CIL* 6.10168.
[178] For example, *CIL* 10.1685 mentions the *familiae gladiatoriae Caesaris* of Alexandria, Egypt.

> the same people have brought water for the use of the bath and consecrated it in the consulships of Nero Caesar Augustus and Antistius Vetus.[179]

This *familia Caesaris* was again a discrete, local group. As for labor function they may have been working with the imperial lands of the Thracian Chersonese.[180] Alternatively, the strategic location of Coela on the narrow straights connecting the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara may suggest other duties. Unlike the work crews Frontinus describes, these imperial slaves could also have helped, along with the free population (*populo*), administer or clerk the area.[181] The fact that a group of imperial slaves was included on a public honorary inscription–if not a monumental one–would in any case indicate that they were important enough to a local community in the Greek East.

The Greek phrase Καίσαρος οἰκία, for its part, is equally rare. I have not found it on an inscription, though this absence could be simply the natural selection of the material evidence that constellates in the Latin west. Ancient and principally Christian literature yields a handful of Greek attestations for the phrase, which I will treat in due time. But one example from Jewish literature to mention here comes from Philo's treatise against the Egyptian governor Flaccus.[182]

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[179] Numini domus Augustae / Ti(berius) Claudius Faustus Regin(us) et / Claudia Nais Fausti / balneum populo et familiai / Caesaris n(ostri) d(e) [s(ua)] p(ecunia) f(ecerunt) idemque / aquam in eius balnei usus / perduxerunt et consacrarunt / [Nerone] Caesare Aug(usto) et Antistio Vetere co(n)s(ulibus) (*CIL* 3.7380). Nero's name was erased.

[180] The area had originally entered the *patrimonium* when Agrippa bequeathed it to Augustus (Dio *hist. Rom*. 54.29.2).

[181] "La *familia* se compose en l'espèce d'esclaves chargés de l'administration du district, plutôt que de son exploitation qui est confiée à des homes libres: le *populous*" (Boulvert 1970: 79).

[182] For discussion of the treatise see van der Horst 2003; for discussion of the historical context see Collins 2000: 118-20; Rajak 2001: 122-24; Gruen 2002: 63-8;

Philo relates that when Herod Agrippa was returning to Judea to claim his throne he stopped in Alexandria to wait for favorable winds and a good ship, as the emperor Gaius had advised him. According to Philo, despite Agrippa's wholly modest arrival in Alexandria, Flaccus' companions stirred up trouble against Agrippa, and Flaccus soon became resentful of the new king. Publically Flaccus was amiable, but behind Agrippa's back he encouraged the city to mock him. The Alexandrians apparently did so constantly, even employing poets and jesters to deride Agrippa with dirty farces. Exasperated with what he perceived as incredible disrespect (βλασφημία) for a king, Philo exclaimed: "Even if he wasn't a king, but one of those from Caesar's household (τις τῶν ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας), wasn't he owed some privileges and honor?"[183] Now, it has been suggested that by the phrase τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκία Philo meant "people in the emperor's entourage." This has then been used a cross-reference for Paul's use of τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκία in Phil 4:22.[184] But this is not quite right. "People in the emperor's entourage" is a generous and enhancing interpretation. While Philo probably did not mean the same thing as Frontinus or Paul, as we will see, his language certainly operates in that same servile sphere.

Less glamorous than 'imperial entourage,' Philo more likely meant an imperial slave, probably a domestic slave (οἰκέτης). Several aspects suggest this. Most

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[183] εἰ δὲ μὴ βασιλεὺς ἦν, ἀλλά τις τῶν ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας, οὐκ ὤφειλε προνομίαν τινὰ καὶ τιμὴν ἔχειν; (Flacc. 35).

[184] The same expression…is used by Paul in Phil 4:22; it was a standard designation for people in the emperor's entourage (van der Horst 2003: 127).

importantly, the Greek Καίσαρος οἰκία is an exact translation of the Latin *familia Caesaris*.[185] "One of those from the *familia* of Caesar" is another way to render Philo's language. 'Imperial slave' also evokes Philo's other apologetic treatise in which he decries the emperor Gaius' house (οἰκία) as comprising a company of domestic slaves (οἰκέται).[186] All of this indicates that 'slave' fits the thrust of Philo's contrapuntal rhetoric. Philo is contrasting a king in the emperor's house with his utter, and no-name (τις) opposite. A slave is an apt counterpoint. But note that Philo was not describing the imperial court with his phrase either. He uses τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκία distinctly to portray an incident that occurred in the provinces and would have resonated most acutely with his provincial audience: even a slave from Caesar's household who arrived in Alexandria should garner more respect than Agrippa received.[187]

Philo's example shows, moreover, that authors will use the phrase τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκία in different ways. Yet, we have little reason to doubt that the meaning of the Greek would veer too far from the Latin original *familia Caesaris*. Although in one sense the emperor's *familia* included all his slaves and freedpersons, there was no 'the' *familia Caesaris*. Overwhelmingly, what we have in the evidence are families (*familiae*) of

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[185] The use of a definite article 'the' is standard Greek, but absent in the Latin language.

[186] *Leg*. 165-6. Not to forget, Agrippa had spent much of his life in the imperial household in Rome as a friend of the emperor Caligula. But Agrippa was later imprisoned for treasonous remarks about Tiberius and found himself entirely at the mercy of the new emperor Caligula for his freedom, the restoration of his reputation and his ancestral kingdom. It may be that one of the 'insults' to Agrippa that the mimes played out in the farces was that Agrippa was one of Caligula's household slaves.

[187] Maren Niehoff suggests a Jewish audience (2001: 40); others, diaspora Judeans locally or throughout the Roman Empire (Ritter 2015: 19), still others Jewish and Gentile, possibly including Roman authorities (Seland 2014: 53)

Caesar–whether in Rome or the provinces–and these were most likely groups of predominantly imperial slaves.

Cultural Cognates

The emperor's slaves and freedpersons have too often been treated as a more or less separate social pyramid in Roman society, one to be analyzed holistically, and more readily compared to the élite than other groups of slaves and freedpersons.[188] Unfortunately, much of this picture developed from Weaver's work. But once we understand that the phrase *familia Caesaris* denoted a slave group, not a civil service system of upward mobility, two aspects come into focus. One is that social mobility was a process more local, organic, and piecemeal for a *familia Caesaris*, and the second is that other cultural cognates are more appropriate for understanding the social, economic, and political realities. I cannot fully explore these cognates in the space of a half-chapter. There is much more work to be done to re-integrate *familia Caesaris* within the ancient slavery system, and I hope that future studies will take up the task. Here I can only present three samples that showcase the possibilities and communicate themes that will resurface later in this study.

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[188] William Westermann could point to imperial slaves and freedman as part of the "amelioration of slavery" and the "increased humanity towards [slaves]." The imperial slaves, he writes, "must have had money in considerable amounts" and the "humanitarian realization" for slaves was "probably abetted by the honorable position attained by the slaves and freedmen of the imperial household through their efficient services in their administration of the Empire (Westermann 1955: 113). No such humanitarian improvement of slavery can be deduced, however. The Roman imperial system continued as a slave society, commodifying human beings throughout the fourth-century as it had done in the first (Harper 2011: 24).

Public Slaves

Imperial slaves, Frontinus makes clear, shared more than kinship terminology with groups of public slaves (*servi publici*). The two worked together on similar tasks and in practically all administrative matters of the empire's cities, colonies, and provinces. On many levels, in fact, imperial slaves were much closer to a *familia publica* of public slaves than Weaver's study might indicate.

At the political and administrative level, the emperor's slaves developed through the pre-existing public slave system. During the Republic the typical Roman expectation was that the members of the aristocracy would use their own slaves and freedmen to help carry out public functions and offices.[189] The Republic's limited number of available public slaves (*servi publici*) demanded this. The result was a semi-private administration with the aristocratic magistrate–the state's representative–using his own slaves in conjunction with those of the *res publica*.[190] With the emperor Augustus the scale of this pattern increased so that his private property–his personal slaves–worked for him, for the state and the people of Rome and thus with its slaves.[191]

Based on some of the evidence, moreover, it is likely that imperial slaves and public slaves received similar remuneration for their services.[192] Frontinus reports in parallel the "rewards" (*commoda*) that each *familia* gets. He says the *commoda* of the *familia publica* comes from the state treasury (*ex aerario*), while the *commoda* of the

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[189] Herrmann-Otto 2009: 179.
[190] Mouritsen 2011: 93; Millar 1977: 59
[191] Schumacher 2011: 597.
[192] Schumacher 2011: 599.

familia Caesaris comes from the imperial purse (*fiscus*).[193] Unfortunately Frontinus does not provide a specific value for either *commoda* and so we get only glimpses of the economics for this *familia Caesaris*.

The amount of available revenue (*reditus*) from the *aerarius*, we are told, was nearly 250,000 sesterces. But this a "ridiculously small" amount as Christer Bruun has said,[194] and there is no warrant for assuming that the expenses of the *familia publica* either equaled or were intended to be covered by the total available revenue.[195] It is equally facile to reckon the annual cost per slave (e.g. HS 1,041.66) by dividing the revenue amount by the number of public slaves (240).[196] On the other hand, Frontinus gives no revenue amount for the *fiscus*. He says only that the *commoda* of the *familia Caesaris* comes from the *fiscus*, just as expenses for other materials and tools–lead, conduits, reservoirs, and basins.

At any rate, we can assume that the *commoda* for each *familia* would have covered the basic expenses of food, clothing, and housing to which slaves were entitled. It is not clear whether these obligations were met wholly or partly in kind.[197] We might assume as well that the *commoda* would have reflected the position that the slave held, and may have included direct payments in cash–Seneca, for instance, mentions a slave

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[193] Frontinus, *De aquaeductu* 118.1, 118.4. The *fiscus* was not quite a treasury. For discussion of *fiscus* and *aerarium* see Millar 2004a and 2004b.
[194] Bruun 1991: 209.
[195] Rodgers 2004: 304.
[196] Rodgers 2004: 304.
[197] Rodgers 2004: 302.

actor who was awarded five denarii a day and five *modii* of grain (8 quarts).[198] It is reasonable to suppose that each *familia* received a salary of sorts, but direct evidence of this for either the *familia publica* or *familia Caesaris* is nowhere to be found.[199]

Working together and, in some cases, probably living in or near one another also meant that the two groups could be close socially. This may have included marriage. An epitaph from mid-first century Rome, for example, records that a certain Claudia Lachne, freedwoman of Antonia, was the wife of a public slave named Philippus Rustianus.[200] Although Rustianus does not record Lachne with the formula *Augusti liberta*, Lachne's patroness Antonia was the daughter of the emperor Claudius.[201] Lachne was thus part of the imperial family, though somewhat distant from the power center. Rustianus worked at the imperial cult shrine that the empress Livia built for Augustus on the Palatine (*sacrarium divi Augusti*), and he was likely in charge of the building's upkeep and the objects contained in it. The name Rustianus is adoptive and derived from his patron, probably someone in the senatorial *Rustii* family, perhaps Titus Rustius Nummius Gallus (*cos*. 34 CE).[202] Thus, we have here one case in which a former slave of the imperial family married a man who was likely a public slave perhaps with ties to another

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198 *servus est, quinque modius accipit et quinque denarios* (*Ep*. 80.7).
199 Rodgers 2004: 302.
200 Dis Manibus / Claudiae / Antoniae / lib(ertae) Lachne / Philippus Rustian(us) / publicus ab / sacrario / divi Augusti / coniugi carissimae / fecit et sibi (*CIL* 6.2329). The inscription does not record *servus publicus*, and so the word *publicus* could be taken as a cognomen for Philippus Rustianus. But this would indicate that he was a former public slave, since the word *publicus* would derive from his status vis-à-vis the state. Compare the names in *CIL* 11.2656. The word *publicus* seems to be short for *servus publicus* and is formulaic with the work *ab sacrario*, which would mean a public (slave) for the shrine of the divine Augustus. See also a similar form of *publicus* in *CIL* 6.2330, 2333, 2334, 2343, 2350.
201 Giovagnoli 2012: 268.
202 Giovagnoli 2012: 268.

senatorial family. This is not an example of a *familia Caesaris*, to be sure, but it illustrates how the social interactions of a former imperial slave could intersect with a public slave.

Associations and Collegia

Another cognate for a *familia Caesaris* is a voluntary association or *collegium*. It was quite common in large households for the slave staffs to form more particular groups, and there are a number of examples associated with the imperial household.[203] In Chapter 3 we will consider several, including a *collegium* of imperial cooks. Here an important example for *familia Caesaris* specifically comes from Narbo in Gallia Narbonensis (modern Narbonne, France). A rough Latin inscription on a grave pillar (*cippus*) reads:

> For the benevolent association of the family of our Caesar's couriers who are in Narbo residence. In front 325 feet […] in depth 305 feet […].[204]

The Latin phrase for the group is *familiae tabellariorum Caesaris* (Figure 6). It identifies a particular group of imperial, most likely slave, couriers as both a *familia Caesaris* and a *collegium*.[205] The collegium of this *familia Caesaris* formed from a larger network

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[203] For discussion see Kloppenborg 1996: 23 and Harland 2003: 30-31.

[204] [collegium sa]/lutare [f]amilia[e] / tabellarior(um) / Caesaris n(ostri) quae / sunt Narbone in / domu / in f(ronte) p(edes) CCCXXV[…] / in a(gro) p(edes) CCCV […] (*CIL* 12.449). The date range is wide because the text lacks determinable dating features. The term *nostri* was common in the status nomenclature of slaves of *privati* by the first century CE, but, according to Weaver, *nostri* does not appear in inscriptions of Imperial slaves from Augustus to Nero (Weaver 1972: 54-55). Weaver suggests that *nostri*, as the status indication for slaves, was coming into vogue by the end of the first century CE (Weaver 1972: 55). All together, the inscription seems to suggest a group of imperial slaves probably active in the first part of the second century or later.

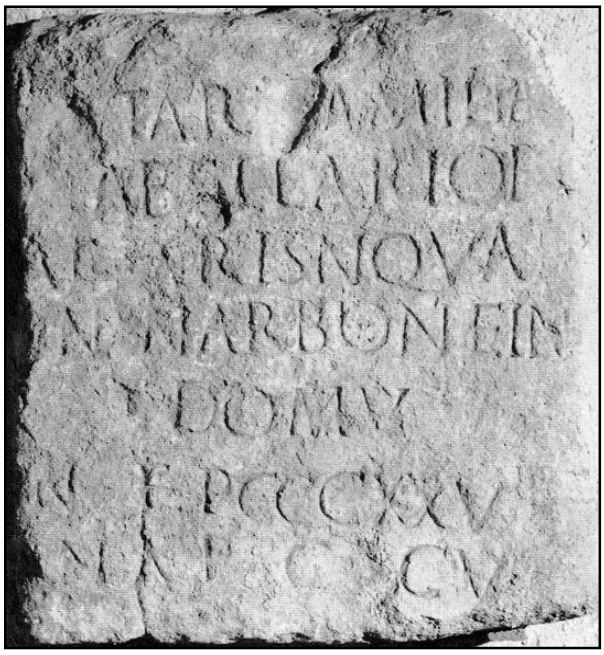

Figure 6: Inscription for *Collegium* of a *familia tabellariorum Caesaris* from Narbo. The word *[f]amilia[e]* end of line 1, *tabellarior(um)* in line 2, and *Caesaris n(ostri)* in line 3.

and in that sense it is a type of household association. The closer ties in work (*tabellarii*) and ethno-geography (*Narbo*) allowed the slaves to form a more distinctive group. The *familia Caesaris* also had a building, and the measurements of length and depth suggest a typical, but large, tomb–presumably a columbarium similar to those for imperial slaves and freedmen at Rome. Again typical for *collegia* was to care for the dead, and as the *cippus* seems to suggest, this *familia Caesaris* must have provided burial space or urn niches for its members. This example affords us the opportunity to consider momentarily the concept of a family of Caesar. As recent studies have stressed, in antiquity kinship was not merely a natural, biological fact, but also a culturally defined

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[205] The restoration of *collegium* in the first (now lost) line is secure since the phrase *collegium salutare* is standard. It occurs, for example, on an inscription from Rome for a collegium of imperial slaves who honor/worship the numinous household of the emperor (*CIL* 6.30983). See also *CIL* 14. 2653 and *CIL* 2.379. Couriers were often slaves, but there are examples of freedmen couriers. The phrase "*collegium salutare*" can designate a "burial club," as for example in the famous inscription concerning worshippers of Diana and Antinoüs (*CIL* 14.2112). While burial was a common activity, this inscription makes clear the activities of such a collegium were not limited to burial. See Harland 2003: 28-9. In another example, the "benevolent association of tree-bearers" (*collegium salutare dendrophorum*) participated in cultic activities and planted pine trees, which were sacred to Magna Mater and Attis (*AE* 1927, 115). See Liu 2009: 53 and n.67.

relation.[206] In addition to biology and consanguinity there were other "ways of connectedness" such as bodily substances that transmitted relatedness; feeding and eating; living together, procreation, and emotion.[207] The various social, occupational, and geographic lines that intersected therefore afforded the emperor's slaves opportunities to create and maintain families of Caesar.

Another example from Ephesos is illustrative on this score. The Latin text is dedicated to Acilia Lamyra, the beloved wife of Apollonius a house-born slave (*verna*) of the emperor and treasurer (*arcarius*) of the province of Asia. It states that Apollonius

> built this monument with the sarcophagus for himself and his own. The associations (*collegia*) written below, consisting of freedmen and slaves of our lord Augustus, take care of these: the Great Association, the Minervian (association) of accountants (*tabularii*), and the Faustinian (association) of registrars (*commentarii*), overseers (*decuriones*), and record keepers (*tabellarii*). This monument does not pass to the heir.[208]

Although the inscription does not record a specific *familia Caesaris*, it shows first how groups of imperial freedmen and imperial slaves were distinguished (*libertorum et servorum domini nostri Augusti*). Moreover, the inscription does not indicate how the slaves and freedmen were divided among which *collegium*, yet each group was

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[206] Harders 2012: 12.

[207] Harders 2012: 13.

[208] D(is) M(anibus) / Aciliae Lamyrae coniugi / carissimae Apollonius / Aug(usti) n(ostri) verna arcarius pro/vinciae Asiae hoc monumentum / cum sarcophago fecit et sibi et su/is quorum curam agunt collegia / lib(ertorum) et servorum domini n(ostri) Aug(usti) i(nfra) s(cripta) / magnum et Minervium tabulari/orum et Faustinianum commen/taresium et decurionum et ta/bellariorum / h(oc) m(onumentum) h(eredem) n(on) s(equetur) (*CIL* 3.6077=*IvE* 6.2200a). The inscription dates between from the mid-second to the third late-third century. Later is possible as well. It was found in 1870 on the road of tombs from the Magnesian Gate to the Artemis Sanctuary.

constituted as a separate *collegia*, organized more particularly by their piety and work-station. The latter, as we have seen, is usually the raison d'être of an imperial slave *familia*. So here we may be glimpsing another part of the process: a *collegium* could facilitate the formation of a *familia Caesaris*, perhaps like the *tabellarii* at Narbo. Apollonius's role is unstated, but he must have had some relationship with the associations, either as a member and/or patron since the slaves and freedmen were caretakers of his family tomb and may have had burial rights there.

It is should not be surprising that a *familia Caesaris* could function or characterize itself as a *collegium*. What is surprising is that we have not found more inscriptions like the one from Narbo. As we will see throughout this study, imperial personnel were constants in associations and *collegia* as members, leaders, and patrons.

With this in mind I should also point out a cognate group for imperial freedman: the *Augustales*. Remarkably, they received no attention in Weaver's study although the *Augustales* had frequent and close interaction with imperial freedmen.[209] *Augustales* is a term used for a group of principally wealthy freedmen who populated the empire's cities and were known for their civic monuments and benefactions. They are identified by various titles on thousands of inscriptions,[210] but were not an empire-wide organization. Nor were the *Augustales* a specific *ordo* placed right below the *decurions* and molded over the senate and *equites*, as was once thought.[211] Rather, as distinct groups of

[209] D'Arms 1975: 338.
[210] *sevir*, *sevir Augustales*, *magister Augustales*, etc.
[211] Mouritsen 2011: 251, 256-7.

freedmen that varied regionally and municipally, they formed similar groups or *collegia* at the local level.[212]

There are dozens of inscriptions that describe the relations between the two freedman groups. One is a festal calendar (*fasti*) from second century Trebula (modern Monteleone Sabino, Italy) that records the four-day festivities for the empress Livia's *natalis*. An imperial freedman named Gaius Julius Sosthenes headed the list of honorands who staged the games (*ludi*) for her in the forum. These *fasti* then indicate that during the same celebration a public banquet was provided for the *Augustales* and decurions. The inscription is fragmentary here, but it is also clear that a *familia gladiatoria* was involved with this meal.[213] Other examples include joint civic dedications by an imperial freedman and the *Augustales*;[214] honors for an imperial freedman by the *Augustales*;[215] or an *Augustalis* marries an imperial freedwoman.[216]

Notably, in a number of cases imperial freedmen were, in fact, *Augustales*, and this is the title recorded on the inscription, not an administrative post.[217] While imperial freedmen could obviously take posts in the administration, and some could work as

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[212] For discussion see Mouritsen 2011: 249-261; Laird 2015: 6, more broadly 1-18.
[213] *CIL* 6. 29681.
[214] *AE* 1902, 0078; *CIL* 11.3083.
[215] *CIL* 10.1261.
[216] Q(uintus) Cominius/ Primus, VIvir Aug(ustalis)/ sibi et / Graeciniae Aug(usti) l(ibertae)/ posterisq(ue) [---] (*CIL* 11.4204, from Interamna Nahars, modern Terni, Umbria).
[217] Publius Aelius Agathemer from Ostia (*AE* 1988, 176); Gaius Julius Gelos from Veii (*CIL* 11.3805); Lucius Aelius Aurelius Apolaustus from Canusium, modern Canosa, Apulia (*CIL* 9.344). Unnamed imperial freedman on an epitaph for his daughter Flavia Athenais (*CIL* 6.10162); Philippus, from Nepet, modern Viterbo (*CIL* 11.3200); Marcus Aurelius Hyla, a pantomimist (Cascella 2002: 79); Tiberius Claudius Lysimachus Gaius Julius, an attendant (*viator sodalium Augustalium*) at Tibur, modern Tivoli (*CIL* 14.3647) Thiasus a freedman of Julia, the daughter of the divine Augustus (*AE* 1975, 289).

bureaucrats at the highest level, for many the social and economic apex was becoming an *Augustalis*.[218] We should not imagine that this was the normal track for an imperial slave even if it may have been an aspiration that was attainable for some.

Social mobility worked for imperial freedmen like it did for *Augustales*. This had important social, religious, and economic effects for the freedmen and the community. Imperial freedmen and freedwomen, *Augustales*, imperial slaves, and other slave and freed groups were engrained in civic life, active in *collegia*, and partakers of euergetic reciprocity. Roman freedmen in general seem to have dominated the urban commercial sector of the economy, and the impression of the evidence is that this included imperial freedmen and some imperial slaves as well.[219] Thus, like others the slaves and former slaves of the emperors who could cash in on various opportunities could recondition themselves, but do so essentially–even if spectacularly–at a local level.

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[218] We should remember that imperial freedmen without posts may not have even held any formal power, and were still distinct from all freeborn officials because of their past enslavement (Mouritsen 2011: 249).

[219] Mouritsen 2011: 206. The evidence for imperial freedmen commercial activities is too sprawling to cite in one note, but to get a sense of the extent, we now have sealed amphora stoppers bearing stamps of imperial freedmen involved in international trade from Red Sea ports along the Eastern desert. For example, an *ostrakon* of the imperial freedman Gaius Julius Epaphroditus has been found as far as the port at Berenike, where one of his wine-dealing agents left it after the Italian wine was shipped East. See Denecker and Vandorpe 2007: 120-21, and 122. Other, similar *ostraka* of the accounts of imperial freedmen have been recovered at Kopton. For other examples see wine-dealing (*CIL* 6.8826), shipping (*ICrete* II.20.7).

Migrant Groups

Recent work in Roman archaeology has emphasized how important migration was in the Roman world,[220] and several studies have included discussions of slave migration.[221] Regrettably, these studies have not specifically discussed imperial slaves. But imperial slaves and freedpersons shared experiences of voluntary or involuntary migration, alienation, and reintegration with several related groups of peoples: permanent emigrants and settlers, temporary contract workers, professional, business or trader migrants, students, refugees and asylum seekers, and cross border commuters.[222]

Over the course of two and a half centuries, thousands of imperial slaves –maybe hundreds of thousands–were forced migrants.[223] They were deracinated from their homeland and taken to a hostland as the emperor's property through purchase, conquest, or gift. This was the result of any number of slaving mechanisms: exposure, child-sale, self-sale, debt, kidnapping, and international importation.[224] There are several literary accounts that relate such migrant experiences of imperial slaves. One vignette is again from Philo.

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[220] For summary and bibliography see Laurence 2012: 121-2, 125-7.
[221] Noteworthy is Webster 2010, Eckardt et al 2010, and Noy 2000.
[222] See van Hear 1998: 40-2.
[223] There have been ample and enlightening studies of the Roman slave supply, which have debated the precise mechanisms by which the number of slaves were maintained. The crux is whether the supply was primarily internal–reproducing itself through slave births–or more external. See mainly Scheidel 1997 and Harris 1999. Also Bruun 2013: 33-4.
[224] Harris 2011: 70-73.

When Philo travelled to Rome in 40 CE on an embassy to the emperor Caligula[225] he was furious that diplomacy was hampered by the emperor's slaves (οἰκέται), who were always meddling with their master. Philo also relates that these slaves were mostly Egyptians (Αἰγύπτιοι)–Philo's rival party–and he duly calls them wicked men, crocodiles and asps. More specifically, the ringleader was Helicon whom Philo does not even call a slave, but a "damnable and abominable creature (ἀνδράποδον)."[226] The word ἀνδράποδον is pejorative and graphic. It suggests that Helicon was booty. He may have been a captive of war–probably made to walk on foot (πούς)–then sold at market as chattel. Philo does not elaborate, but he says that Helicon had originally belonged to another master (δεσπότης) who had gifted (δωρέεσθαι) Helicon to the emperor Tiberius. Though couched in polemic, evidently this body of imperial slaves whom Philo encountered comprised a particular ethnic group (Egyptians) that came to Rome, in one way or another, as imperial property.

The Flavian poets Martial and Statius likewise relate information about the imperial slave Earinus, who was a eunuch and catamite of Domitian. "Caesar's boy" (*Caesareus puer*), as Statius called him,[227] was originally from Pergamum. As the story goes, the goddess Venus, on her way to the Idalian groves, stopped in Pergamum and found Earinus as a nursling (*alumnus*) playing before the altar at the temple of Asklepios. Because of his boyish grace (*puerile decus*) Venus at first mistook Earinus for one of her

[225] Josephus, *Ant*. 18.8; 19.5; 20.5.
[226] Philo, *Leg*. 166.
[227] Statius, *Silv*. 3.4.

own sons, except that he had no bow or wings like Cupid. So instead of relinquishing Earinus to common servitude, she decided to take the beauty (*forma*) to the imperial palace in Rome where he would be a slave to honor (*famulus honori*).[228]

If we filter out the mythology we can deduce that Earnius probably was a native of Aeolis, but as a child had been dumped at the Temple of Asklepios–temples were common depositories for unwanted children.[229] Rather than Venus, a slave-dealer–perhaps one working for the emperor–acquired Earinus and either took him to a local market or brought him to Rome's *macellum* where he was purchased for the emperor. Whatever the case may be, Earinus–like Caligula's Egyptian slaves–was displaced from a particular geographic area and endured what was probably a tortuous path to the palace.[230]

Several other examples I will forgo here. But as will become evident later, inscriptions of imperial personnel often gesture to the many migratory slavery routes–local, circular, chain, career, or a combination–that took them to Rome or other parts of the Mediterranean.[231] Sometimes inscriptions state explicitly the 'nationality' (*natio*) of the imperial freedperson,[232] but most often the inscriptions record cities, provinces, or

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[228] Martial, *Ep*. 9.11-12, 16-17, 36; Statius, *Silv*. 3.4.
[229] Rawson 2003: 118.
[230] While we cannot know how he reconfigured his *natio* or *ethnos* after enslavement, Earinus must have claimed some ethnic stake in Pergamum, as apparently sent back locks of his hair in a golden box.
[231] So many enslaved would come to Rome and enter imperial service there, while others probably remained closer to their homelands, especially those born on imperial estates. In this case, the imperially enslaved were a kind of "internal diaspora" as the distinctive sense of themselves was oriented toward a lost or alienated home defined as aboriginal. Lilley 2004 and 2006 [CITATIONS] Clifford 1994: 309.
[232] For example, Strato, an imperial freedman of the second century who is recorded as "by birth Syrian, Antiochene" (*natione Syru Antioc(h)ense*; *CIL* 6.26883).

names that allow us to reconstruct the imperial personnel's possible geographic paths and ethnic antecedents. The geographies and ethnicities seem to have been as diverse as the experience of slavery itself.

Imperial slaves were taken from all parts of the Mediterranean, though there were particular areas that seem to have supplied more. We can deduce this by identifying slave markets. For example, we know that countless slaves were exported from the province of Asia Minor, and that slave traders were extremely active there.[233] And it is fairly clear that slave owners–and this must have included the emperors and their slavers–[234]gave thought to slave race and ethnicity, and there was substantial prejudice for and against slaves from certain places.[235]

On the other hand, less coercive forms of migration, though still involuntary, affected imperial personnel. Rome's imperial administration was one of the most important forces of geographic mobility in the Roman world, and imperial slaves and freedpersons were a fundamental part of it.[236] Inscriptions of high-level imperial freedmen that record several posts may thus not show a clear and structured *curus honorum*, but the many geographic movements and stops that the system had dictated. For example, the second-century imperial freedman Marcus Ulpius Probus was a

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[233] Noy 2000: 227. For the reference to slaves in the customs law of Asia see Cottier and Corbier 2008: 30-31.
[234] See the Καισαριανῶν in Epictetus' anecdote (*Diss*. 1.19.19).
[235] Noy 2000: 37. The jurist Ulpian documents, in fact, that slave dealers had to disclose the *natio* of a slave at the point of sale–this does not mean they did but it was a concern (Ulpian, *Dig*. 21.1.31). Those born into imperial slavery (*verna*) were not migrants in the strict sense–their slave parents may have been–but to a certain extent were nonetheless deracinated from an ancestral culture (Patterson 1982: 5). See Garnsey's three basic components of slavery (1996: 1).
[236] Eckardt et al 2010: 102.

procurator in Pannonia Superior, then at Theveste, Africa (Tébessa, Algeria), and seems to have died in Ostia.[237] But Pannonia Superior and Africa were likely only the stops that his stepdaughter Ulpia Probitas thought most worthy to list on his epitaph. Assuming that at some point he was formerly an imperial slave, or at least a lower-level imperial freedman, he must have worked in other areas. Likewise, an early Tiberian edict to which we will return in the next chapter also attests to some of the expected migrations of imperial slaves and freedmen across provinces.[238]

The point of all this is that no matter if imperial personnel were in Rome or a provincial city they shared experiences with migrant and ethnic groups of all kinds in the Roman melting pot.[239] Like many others, the emperor's slaves also had to interface with a host society, and seek avenues of integration that could lead to further opportunity and social mobility. For this reason, as we will see, imperial personnel throughout the Mediterranean were active in many types of social networks, including ethno-geographic networks and immigrant congregations that worshipped a Jewish god.

CONCLUSION

This chapter attempted to deconstruct the umbrella phrase *familia Caesaris* and show what it really meant in antiquity. In so doing it tried to expose two commonly held and

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[237] D(is) M(anibus) / M(arcus) Ulp(ius) Augg(ustorum) lib(ertus) / Probus proc(urator) / provinciae Pannoniae / super(ioris) et Africae / reg(ione) Thevest(e) vixit / annis LXXI m(ensibus) V / dieb(us) XIII / Ulp(ia) M(arci) f(ilia) Probitas / privigna et heres / b(ene) m(erenti) (*CIL* 14.176).
[238] *AE* 1976, 653 (13-15 CE).
[239] Webster 2010: 59.

interrelated ideas. The first is that the *familia Caesaris* was a high status *order* in Roman society comprising all the emperor's slaves and freedmen, and second that this status group inhabited a fixed hierarchy in which upward mobility through a career structure was innate to the system. Both ideas have fostered some problematic claims about the social, economic, and political status of Christians in the *familia Caesaris*, and therefore about the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire. My reflection on the history and construction of the so-called *familia Caesaris* and its reception in the field of New Testament and Early Christian studies led to a new critique of P. R. C. Weaver's influential ideas. This critique focused on hierarchy (socio-political location, bureaucracy, and careers) and social mobility (occupation, marriage, manumission) and all too briefly offered alternative comparisons.

As a re-description I showed that *familia Caesaris* desginated an individual group of the emperor's slaves, and definitely not a civil service institution of all imperial slaves and freedmen. There were many distinct, though similar families of Caesar with different work assignments, and they lived in various locations of the empire, east and west. As particular groups these principally slave families had several cultural cognates which serve as excellent comparisons at the individual and group level. The cognates include public slaves, associations and *collegia*, and migrant groups, broadly conceived. This re-description should be the coup de grâce to 'the' *familia Caesaris* as we have known it. Weaver himself helped drive the point home. In the end, this new way of thinking about imperial personnel will allow a more fruitful investigation of their significance for early Christianity. We can now begin with the earliest example.

CHAPTER 2

SAINTS IN CAESAR'S HOUSE: PAUL, THE PHILIPPIANS, AND A *FAMILIA CAESARIS*

"*Paul had no connexions with the court; the salutations he once sends from them 'that are of Caesar's household' are not from princesses and ministers, but from simple Imperial slaves, petty clerks, employed perhaps at Ephesus in the departments of finance or of crown lands*." ---Adolf Deissmann[1]

INTRODUCTION

Adolf Deissmann must have known how radical his statement was. The idea that Paul and "Caesar's household" were not in Rome went against nearly every previous interpretation. In fact, only a few years earlier–in a work that would become the standard social history of early Christianity for the next century–another Adolf had taken the exact opposite view. Adolf von Harnack opened volume 2 of his monumental *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (1902) by surveying the inward spread of Christianity among the aristocracy and Rome's imperial court. For Harnack, Paul's greeting from those of Caesar's household in Phil 4:22 signaled the initial point of expansion and chief evidence for "*connections* of Christians and the *court*."[2] As important as his work was, Harnack largely reiterated the time-honored tradition about Paul and "Caesar's household."

[1] Deissmann 1927 [1908]: 160.
[2] Harnack 1908 [1902]: 43-44.

Deissmann, however, had conducted extensive fieldwork in 1906 and again in 1909, including significant time at Ephesos during the initial excavations by the Austrians who hosted him and his eminent colleague, the archaeologist Friedrich von Duhn.[3] In addition to collecting material evidence on his own, the epigraphic catalogues compiled by Theodor Mommsen and Rudolf Herzog were also crucial for Deissmann. So in the fourth edition of his *Light from the Ancient East* (1922) he asserted: "statistics compiled from inscriptions and papyri show that '*praetorium*' [Phil 1:13] and 'Caesar's household,' which have hitherto always been taken to indicate Rome, are by no means necessarily distinctive of the capital." He goes on: "This [Caesar's household in Phil 4:22] does not refer to the palace (there were imperial palaces elsewhere than in Rome), but to the body of imperial slaves, scattered all over the world. We have evidence of imperial slaves even at Ephesus."[4]

Despite Deissmann's groundbreaking insight, and a multitude of fine studies on Philippians in the past century, there is still much work to be done to understand the "saints from Caesar's household," and their relation to Paul and the Philippians. For example, the usual treatments of Phil 4:22 explain the situation thusly: while Paul was imprisoned (Phil 1:13) he either converted,[5] or allied with already converted,[6] imperial

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[3] Deissmann 1927: 393, xxi.
[4] 1927: 238 and n.3.
[5] Smit 2013: 53, n.95; Witherington 2011: 10 Reumann 2008: 740; Tajra 1994: 67; Frend 1984: 109; Michaelis 1935: 75.
[6] Bruce 1989: 158; Houlden 1970: 33; Lightfoot 1957 [1868]: 19.

slaves and freedmen–"some very well-connected Christians."[7] For this reason, he then sends greetings from them to the Philippians (Phil 4:22). Yet, these explanations don't explain much. The traditional notion of conversion is also fraught with baggage. There was more going on, and conversion in the traditional sense, at least, is not the most appropriate way to understand what that was.[8]

But the basic conversion scenario is also bound to a series of other kindred issues that focus on, for example, Paul's role as Christian missionary à la canonical Acts, the implications of saints in Caesar's household for the social organization and the socio-political status of early Christianity, or the social levels and prospects of upward mobility for Pauline communities. Meanwhile, the debate over the provenance of Philippians, which raged long after Deissmann, has cut across these issues so that the historical value of Caesar's household has become little more than a dot on the map–Rome or Ephesos?

The result of all these questions is that the connection between the saints in Caesar's household and the Philippians usually gets overlooked.[9] The information we have from Paul's letter indicates that his connection to Caesar's household was not the crux of the greetings he conveys. Indeed, there were a series of overlapping relationships for which to account: those within Caesar's household, those between Paul and certain persons in Caesar's household, and those between persons in Caesar's household and the Philippians. As I will argue here, the most important of these relationships were between

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[7] Witherington 2011: 286.
[8] See discussion of "conversion" in the introduction.
[9] A more recent welcome exception is Ascough 2003.

the "saints" in Caesar's household and the Philippians. All these interrelationships, though, were cultivated in the Aegean environment close to Paul's arena of activity.

To set the stage, therefore, we must first revisit that old problem–the provenance of Philippians.[10] Then in the second section of the chapter, drawing from epigraphic evidence and Paul's other letters, I sketch a profile of Caesar's household, including their social relations, work, mobility, and economic capabilities in an Aegean context. In the final section I use social network theory to describe the triangular relationship between Paul, the Philippians, and the saints from Caesar's household.

LOCATING AND SITUATING PAUL: EPHESOS OR ROME?

In the past few decades, scholars have increasingly moved away from a Roman provenance for Philippians, and considered Ephesos as the likely spot. They have done so for many well-known reasons: the proximity of Ephesos to Philippi, and the multiple journeys that Philippians presupposes; Paul's expectation to be released and come to the Philippians soon (παρουσία, Phil 1:26; ταχέως, 2:24). In sharp contrast, Paul's expressed intent journeying to Rome (from Jerusalem, after leaving Corinth and Macedonia–presumably Philippi; 2 Cor 7:2) was to go on to Spain (Rom 15:28). The geographic horizons of the two are thus quite opposite.

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[10] Like the majority of scholars, I hold that Philippians is a single, unified letter. But partition theories have been common. For examples see Koester 2000 [1982]: 53-5. In general the theories have a long tradition in the German schools, e.g. Walter et al 1998: 21-3; Bormann 1995; Schenk 1984: 75. In English the most recent and influential iteration is Reumann 2008: 3-7; see also Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 218-19. The friendship *topoi* throughout, combined with a lack of textual evidence in ancient manuscripts for a divided letter, militates against a partition theory. For my purposes the integrity of the letter is secondary to explaining the relationships.

There are two important implications of this scholarly shift: first, the date for Philippians belongs not at the end of Paul's life but earlier in the Aegean phase–as resemblances between Philippians and Philemon, 1 Corinthians, and Galatians would suggest. And second, perhaps most importantly, *praetorium* (Phil 1:13) and "Caesar's household" (Phil 4:22) were not exclusive to Rome but fit Ephesos as well.[11] Although an Ephesian provenance continues to gain favor, there is still more work to be done. Particularly, the implications of the word πραιτωρίον in Phil 1:13 needs attention, both for locating Paul and for situating his connection to "Caesar's household" Phil 4:22.

The interpretation of πραιτωρίον in Phil 1:13 as a group of people such as the emperor's bodyguard, the "praetorian" or "imperial guard," has often leant plausibility to a Roman provenance for Philippians.[12] Oddly enough, even though nearly everyone until

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[11] For summary of the issues, see Reumann 2008: 13-14, Hawthorne 2004: xliii-xlv and more generally xxxix-l. and the standard commentaries. In the eighteenth century Caesarea Maritima (Acts 23: 33- 27:2) and Corinth were both advanced as well, but neither has gained the traction that Ephesos has. In the revised version of his 1983 commentary on Philippians Hawthorne, for instance, changed his position from Caesarea to an Ephesian provenance (2004: l). At the turn of the twentieth century the issue under debate was first, Paul's imprisonment in Ephesos, and then secondarily, whether and which imprisonment Epistles–e.g. Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon–were written from Ephesos or elsewhere, such as Rome or Caesarea. Adolf Deissmann laid much of the groundwork for an Ephesian provenance of Philippians, particularly the points about geographic distance, "Caesar's household" and *praetorium* (1927 [1908]: 237-38, and 377). These insights were prompted, in large part, because of his fieldwork at Ephesos. Diessman also used epigraphic catalogues that included inscriptions from imperial slaves and freedmen (1927 [1908]: 377). Heinrich Lisco (1900) usually gets credit for first proposing an Ephesian provenance (Reumann 2008: 14; Trebilco 2004: 83, n.151). But this may not be the case. For his part, Deissmann was adamant that he did not owe the Ephesian imprisonment and provenance hypothesis to H. Lisco's book, and even states that he himself presented the hypothesis first while lecturing at the Theological Seminary at Herborn in 1897 (Deissmann 1957 [1912]: 17, n.1; 1927: 237, n.1). In some of the then-new arguments for Ephesos, Deissmann was credited and followed without a mention of Lisco (so Lake 1914: 489), and Deissmann also encouraged other scholars in the United States to write about an Ephesian imprisonment and provenance (so Robinson 1910: 181, n.1). I would give credit to Deissmann, then. For the earliest, and extensive, bibliography on those espousing an Ephesian provenance, see Deissmann 1923: 122, n.5 and [1912]: 17, n.1. Some of the most important are Albertz 1910, Lake 1910, Feine 1916, and Duncan 1929.

[12] Recently Witherinton 2011: 10.

the early twentieth century thought Paul wrote Philippians from Rome, it was not because they thought πραιτωρίον meant "Praetorian Guard" or even a group of people.[13] Caesar's household in Phil 4:22 was much weightier for deciding on a Roman provenance. Rather, until the nineteenth century, πραιτωρίον in Phil 1:13 was rendered as a physical space (e.g. a palace, judgment hall, etc.). Accordingly, τοῖς λοιποῖς πάσιν was rendered as "all other places."[14] Tradition got this part right, then: in Phil 1:13 Paul was referring to a building.

The change in interpretation to "praetorian guard" or "imperial guard" is an invention of J. B. Lightfoot, and a traditional byproduct of reading Philippians through the prism of canonical Acts. Like others of his time, Lightfoot completley took for

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[13] In general, see the discussion in Curran 1945.

[14] John Chrysostom (*Hom. Phil.* arg. n.1), for example, relates that Paul was "calling the 'praetorion' the royal palace of Nero (πραετώριον τὰ βασίλεια τοῦ Νέρωνος καλῶν). Chrysostom presumes that *praetorium* refers to the palace, but seems to be aware that the term is not exclusive to Rome since he later has to explain to his audience: "For at that time this is what they were calling the royal palace (Τέως γὰρ οὕτως ἐκάλουν τὰ βασίλεια; *Hom. Phil.* 2.2). For text see Migne *PG* vol. 62, col. 177 and 192. Then in his homilies on Romans (*Hom. Rom.* arg. n.1) Chrysostom emphasizes that the gospel went beyond the *praetorium* and throughout even the whole city. For text, see Migne, *PG* vol. 60, col. 393. Likewise in Jerome's commentary on Philemon (*Comm. Phlm.* 1) he infers that *praetorium* means the imperial palace because of "Caesar's household" in Phil 4:22. "Dehinc quod vincula sua manifesta dicit facta pro Christo in omni praetorio. Quid sit autem praetorium, in ipsius Epistolae fine significat, Salutant vos omnes sancti, maxime autem qui de Caesaris domo sunt." For text see Migne's *PL* vol.26, col.605C. The Medieval and Early Modern period preferred "judgment hall" and "all other places." The Wycliffe Bible (1380) reads: "my boondis weren maad knowun in crift in cch moot hall and in alle othere placis." Erasmus' Greek-Latin NT (1519): "in toto praetorio ac caeteris omnibutque." Coverdale Bible (1535): "my bondes in Christ are manifest thorow out all ye iudgmēt hall, and in all other places." Matthew Bible (1537): "my bandes in Christ are manifest thorow out all the iudgmēt hall & in all other places." Great Bible (1541): "my bandes in Christ are manifest thorowe oute all the iudegment hall and in all other places." Second Edition Matthew Bible (1549): "throughout all the judgment hall, an in all other places." Geneva New Testament (1557): "So that my bandes in Christ ate famous throughout all the [d]Iudgement hall, and in all other *places*." The note beside Iudgement hall reads: "That is, in the Court or Palais of the Emperour Nero." In the First King James Bible (1611): "so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*." The marginal note has "Caesar's court" also "Or, to all other."

granted that Paul wrote Philippians from Rome.[15] (Deissmann and Lisco were a generation later). From this base assumption, then, Lightfoot looked for a meaning of *praetorium* that fit in the particular "local" context, namely, Rome, and that fit the descriptions of Paul in canonical Acts. After discarding several possibilities–the imperial palace in Rome, the praetorian barracks attached the palace, the praetorian camp (*Castra praetoria*)–much of which he was correct about, Lightfoot suggests *praetorium* refers to a "body of men," namely "imperial guards," or "soldiers of the praetorian guard."[16] (As examples, he cites literary evidence in which *praetorium* signifies military personnel). This sense of *praetorium* is appropriate, says Lightfoot, because it fits with the last phrase of Phil 1:13 (τοῖς λοιποῖς πάσιν), fits Luke's statement that the apostle dwelt in his own hired house, and pivotally, fits with Paul's position as an imperial prisoner in the charge of the prefect of the praetorians.[17] Finally, to show the plausibility of Paul's experience, Lightfoot relates the case of Herod Agrippa, who was once in custody of the praetorians in Rome.[18]

Since Lightfoot unveiled his explanation of Phil 1:13, many scholars have followed by interpreting πραιτωρίον (Phil 1:13) as "imperial guard," "palace guard," "praetorian guard," and so on.[19] It is now a standard translation.[20] And like Lightfoot,

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[15] Lightfoot 1957 [1868]: 99.
[16] Lightfoot 1957 [1868]: 6-7, 102.
[17] Lightfoot 1957 [1868]: 102.
[18] Lightfoot 1957 [1868]: 103.
[19] Bruce says *praetorium* refers to the emperor's bodyguard and it was "natural" that the soldier who guarded Paul [Acts 28:16] "should be a member of the imperial bodyguard" (1989: 41); Fee interprets *praetorium* as "palace guard" and cites Lightfoot, "whose arguments on this matter have never been

others have also used Herod Agrippa's case as a parallel for Paul in Rome.[21] The problem is that Lightfoot's often-repeated (re-)interpretation of Phil 1:13 is a concoction of synthetic readings and faulty history.

Lightfoot suggests that *praetorium* in Phil 1:13 means the praetorian guards because he had already conflated Acts 28:16 with Phil 1:13 (ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ). In the introduction to his famous commentary on Philippians, Lightfoot says that when Paul arrived in Rome after his appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11, 28:19) he was under custody of "soldiers of the praetorian guard," having been "delivered over to the commander of the imperial guards, the prefect of the praetorians."[22] How does Lightfoot figure this? In a note he cites Acts 28:16: παρέδωκεν τοὺς δεσμίους τῷ στρατοπεδάρχῃ.[23] The last word Greek word (στρατοπεδάρχη), he says, is equivalent to the Latin *praefectus praetorio*, the Praetorian Prefect, head of the Praetorian Guard in Rome. However, Lightfoot conflated Phil 1:13 and Acts 28:16 using an inferior textual tradition of Acts 28:16. As he admits at the end of his note: "The whole clause [Acts 28:16] however is rejected by most editors, as the balance of existing [textual] authorities is very decidedly against it. On the other

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overturned (1995: 113, n. 34)." See also Witherington 2011: 10; Rapske 1994: 173-91; Martin 1987 [1959]: 70-72; Manson 1962 [1939]: 152.

[20] The NRSV in the 2006 edition of the Harper Collins Study Bible, an annotated edition by the Society of Biblical Literature reads: "it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ." The note has (Gk *whole praetorium*). The NET reads: "The whole imperial guard and everyone else knows that I am in prison for the sake of Christ." The ASV reads: "my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest."

[21] Lightfoot 1957 [1868]: 103-4. Mitchell 2010: 86; Schnabel 2004: 2.1268; Jeffers 1999: 170; Rapske 1994; Reicke 1970: 285. For the long account see Josephus, *Ant*. 18.6.5-10. The synthesis is repeated unwittingly, even in a recent book on the Praetorian Guard. See Bingham (2013: 94, n.93) who like many Classical scholars are unaware of critical discussions in the New Testament field.

[22] Lightfoot 1957 [1868]: 6-7.

[23] Lightfoot 1957 [1868]: 7.

hand the statement does not look like arbitrary fiction, and probably contains a genuine tradition, even if it was no part of the original text."[24] In other words, the interpretation of πραιτωρίον in Phil 1:13 as guards in Rome derives not only from a synthetic reading of Acts 28:16 and Phil 1:13, but a synthetic reading plus a rejected textual variant.[25]

But the bigger problem is the entire notion that Paul was under house-arrest or custody in Rome, or that Paul had yet travelled to Rome. This notion relies exclusively on later sources like Acts (23:11; 28:14, 16) and 2 Timothy (1:17; 4:16).[26] Paul makes clear that when he was planning to leave the eastern Mediterranean headed for Spain, he had never been to Rome (Rom 15:23-24). Those who opt for a Roman provenance of Philippians are thus *required* to use Acts, and usually sneak in 2 Timothy as well. What is nice about an Ephesian hypothesis, by contrast, is that it only needs the undisputed Pauline letters to work. We know from Paul himself that he spent a significant amount of

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[24] Lightfoot 1957 [1868]: 7, n.4.

[25] The latest edition of Nestle-Aland (28th) shows Acts 28:16 as follows: ἐπετράπη τῷ Παύλῳ μένειν καθ' ἑαυτὸν σὺν τῷ φυλάσσοντι αὐτὸν στρατιώτῃ ("Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier guarding him"). According to Metzger, "The Western text expands ἐπετράπη τῷ Παύλῳ into ὁ ἑκατόνταρχος παρέδωκε τοὺς δεσμίους τῷ στρατοπεδάρχῳ τῷ δὲ Παύλῳ ἐπετράπη" and "the expansion passed into the Byzantine text (2002 [1971]: 443)." So the critical apparatus in Nestle-Aland 28 shows the expansion with manuscripts L 323, 614, 945, 1241, in the Majority Text, i.e. Koine and Byzantine (Aland and Aland 1995: 248), the latest of the New Testament text types (Metzger 2002 [1971]: 7); and in the 13th century Old Latin text of Acts in Codex Gigas (gig) (Aland and Aland 1995: 187), following an asterisked reading (a later corrector's emendation) in the 7th century Syriac revision (sy^{h**}) by Thomas of Heraclea (the so-called Harklensis). See also Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger 2007: 398, 401. In effect, the two variants in Acts represent a later interpretive explanation to hold it together with Phil 4:22 rather than being an independent witness.

[26] It has often been stated that the particular problem with an Ephesian provenance is that neither canonical Acts nor the Pauline letters explicitly mention a local imprisonment (Trebilco 2004: 83; Müller 1993: 18; O'Brien 1991: 22). But the authentic Paul–the Paul of the undisputed Pauline letters–never explicitly states where any of his imprisonments occurred. So in the absence of his explicit comments, it is dubious to argue for a Roman imprisonment and provenance for Philippians using accessorizing details from Acts (e.g. Witherington 2011: 9).

time in Ephesos (1 Cor. 15:32; 16:8). And contrary to canonical Acts, Paul states that he had been imprisoned many times (ἐν φυλακαῖς; 2 Cor 6:5, 11:23) while in the Aegean. He also states, after writing to the Philippians, that he had experienced affliction (θλῖψις) *in Asia* (2 Cor 1:8-10).[27] Notably, when Paul writes to the Philippians he uses the word "affliction" (θλῖψις) precisely in conjunction with his "chains" (τοῖς δεσμοῖς; Phil 1:17), and uses it again to describe the Philippians' response to his enchained situation (Phil 4:14).[28] When Paul wrote to the Philippians he was in chains in Asia. But sadly, alloyed readings of Acts and Philippians continue to plague present discussion about Paul's location and situation when he wrote to Philippi.[29] The irony is that canonical Acts, for all its flaws, uses the same word Paul does in Phil 1:13, only not for guards, but for a *provincial*, administrative building (ἐν τῷ πραιτωρίῳ τοῦ Ἡρῴδου; Acts 23:35)–Herod's *praetorium* at Caesarea.[30]

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[27] Compared with his other usages of provincial nomenclature, this too may suggest the leading city of Asia, i.e. Ephesos. See Phil 4:15, 1 Thess 1:7-8, 2 Cor 8:1; Rom 15:26.

[28] *Contra* Witherington who writes: "2 Cor 1.8-10 refers to an affliction 'we' experienced in Ephesus. Surely this is a reference to some sort of illness or, more likely, social pressure or persecution rather than to any sort of incarceration…Paul is the sole person in chains in Philippians (2011: 9)." 2 Cor 1:8-10 was written from Philippi (2 Cor 7:5-7).

[29] E.g. Ware 2005: 171-2, n.24, citing Bruce 1983: xxii. But Acts and Philippians do not hold together neatly, anyway. See White 2004: 145-51; also White 1995a: 241-252. Granting that canonical "Acts" is a textual mess it still never mentions Caesar's household, for instance, whether in Rome or elsewhere. Likewise, Acts never relates that when Paul was in Rome he was imprisoned or chained in a *praetorium*, and Acts never mentions he was under watch of the "praetorian guard" or a "praetorian" soldier–at least not in the superior readings. What is more, contrary to what Paul says about his plight (δεσμοί; Phil 1:7), Acts does not even use the word "chains" to describe Paul's situation in Rome. Acts states, rather, that Paul was in custody, but was allowed to stay by himself with the solider guarding him in "a rented lodging" (ξενία; Acts 28:23). This word ξενία is the Greek equivalent of the Latin *hospitium* and means a rented lodging, guest-chamber, or inn, where Paul could receive or entertain guests.

[30] See Burrell 1996.

In addition to the hermeneutical and textual problems, from a historical perspective the idea that the praetorian or imperial guard would have kept Paul is highly doubtful. It is the stuff of novels.[31] The principle purpose of the guard was the emperor's personal safety. When involved with legal trials, which was rare, they guarded persons who posed political threats (e.g. Mithridates III) or who could muster coups d'états (e.g. Valerius Asiaticus).[32] Further, the prisoners that the Praetorian Guard kept–and this is crucial–were "high-profile," that is, already close to the emperors or members of the aristocracy who had stepped dangerously out of line.[33] Agrippa, for instance, shared his "prayer" that "Tiberius would soon die" to his close friend and confidant Gaius, the future emperor, while the two were in Rome riding together in the back of a chariot. Tiberius learned about and took issue with the comments, among other reasons, because of Agrippa's status–he was a guest in the imperial house in Rome–and Agrippa was frequently around the emperor. Paul was not a member of the aristocracy, he definitely was no Judean prince, and in reality had no access to the Roman emperor.[34]

To return to Phil 1:13, then, let us reconsider the terminology. Had Paul wanted to indicate a group of soldiers, in Rome or elsewhere, he would *not* have used the neuter singular form of the word πραιτωρίον (Latin *praetorium*). This form is a substantive, its

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[31] For those interested in a fanciful tale see, for example, the 2006 book by P. M. Prescott entitled *Optimus Praetorian Guard*.

[32] Tiberius Julius Mithridates was a client king of the Bosporan Kingdom whom Claudius dethroned and whom subsequently rebelled (Tacitus, *Ann*. 12.15-21); Valerius Asiaticus was a wealthy *consul* charged with corruption of the military, adultery with Poppaea Sabina–future wife of Nero–and sexual effeminacy (Tacitus, *Ann*. 11.1). On the duties of the Praetorian Guard, see now Bingham 2013: 81-114.

[33] Bingham 2013: 93.

[34] Of course, Paul also never mentions Roman citizenship. He never mentions a legal trial (κρίσις), or an appeal (ἐπικαλεῖν). Again, these are later accessories from Acts.

ending indicative of a physical structure or building.[35] It did not it denote the Praetorian Guard.[36] Rather, to indicate guard(s) a form of πραιτωριανός would be most appropriate,[37] or a form of πραιτορία could also work.[38] More importantly, as a plethora of examples show, when πραιτωρίον/ *praetorium* does appear as a metonymic for a group of soldiers or guards, additional military designations accompany the word.[39] The reason for the additional terminology is that πραιτωρίον by itself was not strictly, or even

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[35] See Smyth 1984 §851.1-2. Compare other substantives in which the building derives from characteristic actions: temple (ἱερόν), speaking platform (λογεῖον), museum (Μουσεῖον), auditorium (ἀκροατήριον), workshop (ἐργαστήριον), council house (βουλευτήριον), or basilica (βασιλικόν).

[36] *Contra* Bockmuehl 1998: 28. See the summative statement in Bowen 1920: 113.

[37] See *LSJ* p. 1458. For example, in a late-second century inscription from Beroia, Macedonia a Marcus Aurelius Alexander is called a στρατιώτης πραιτωριανός on his votive (*AE* 2000, 1303). For the plural, πραιτωριανοί, see Cassius Dio, *hist. Rom*. 53.25.

[38] So from Ephesos, for example, a Vibius Seneca is recorded as a commander (χειλίαρχος) of the "tenth cohort of praetorians" (κοόρτης δεκάτης πραιτωρίας), a detachment of praetorians (οὐηξιλλατιωνος κλάσσης πραιτωρίας) from Misenum and Ravenna (*IvE* 3.737). Similarly, from the Fayum, Egypt a "division" of praetorians (*classis*/ κλασσης πραιτωρίαι; *AE* 1922, 135), and from Alexandria, a tribune of praetorians (χιλίαρχος πραιτωρ(ίας)/ tribunus cohortis… praetoriae; *AE* 1998, 1481). Also from Ephesos, in the late first or early second century CE a Marcus Arruntius Claudianus is recorded as prefect of a cohort, tribune twice, and prefect of a detachment of praetorians (*vexilli Praetorianorum*; *IvE* 3.620).

[39] *OLD* s.v. *praetorium* 2, 1448. Phrases such as "praetorian commander" (*praefectus praetorio* /ἔπαρχος πραιτωρίον; *CIL* 10.6569=*ILS* 478=*IG* 14.911); into the *praetorium* "of the 7th cohort" (*in praetorium cohortis VII*; *CIL* 6.2649=*ILS* 2035, from Verecunda, Numidia); and a "soldier" of a particular "legion" who died at the *praetorium* (*militi legionis III Augustae exacto at praetorium*; *CIL* 8. 4240= *ILS* 2387). See also the phrase "*cohors* I Tungr(orum) m(illiaria) pra[etor(ium)]" (*AE* 1967, 260). So from Ephesos in the Trajanic period, an honorary inscrption is erected for Marcus Gavius Bassus, prefect (*praefectus*/ ἔπαρχος) of the 6th Brittonum cohort by members of his body-guard (*praetori eius*; *IvE* 3.680). From Philippi, around 96 CE, an honorary inscription for Lucius Tatinius Cnosus calls him *militi cohortis IIII pr(aetoriae)* and a *beneficiario pr(aefecti) pr(aetorio)* (Philippi[1] 202). Also from Philippi, an undated Latin epitaph for Lucius Iunius Maximus records him as a member of *cohortis III*, *beneficiari praefectorum praetorio* (*CIL* 3.1, 645=Philippi[1] 429). Again from Philippi, sometime after 138CE, a veteran of the second Jewish War named Decimus Furius Octavius is recorded as a *miles coh(ortis) X urbane*, *translat(us) in coh(ortem) VI pr(aetoriam)* and a *sing(ularis) pr(aefecti) pr(aetorio)* (*CIL* 3.1, 7334=Philippi[1] 617). Philippi was not primarily a military colony in the Julio-Claudian period, however. While veterans were settled by Antony and a number of veterans do appear in later inscriptions (such as the above), especially from the Antonine period, the settlers of the Augustan colony were largely Italian partisans of Antony who were expatriated (White 1995a: 242 and Dio Cassius, *Hist*. 51.4.6). Finally, a certain Alexander from the island of Syros (78 nmi/ 144 km southeast of Athens), identifies himself as "a soldier from those of the *praetorium* of the proconsul" (Ἀλέξανδρος στρατιώτης ἐκ τῶν τοῦ πραιτωρίου τοῦ ἀνθυπάτου (*IG* 12,5 697, middle-imperial period). The unnamed proconsul is probably that of Achaea.

principally, a military term in the imperial period.[40] There is, therefore, no reason to think that the historical Paul ever had any encounter with the Praetorian Guard in Rome, no reason to translate πραιτωρίον in Phil 1:13 in a way that might suggest he had, and no reason to imagine that the building Paul refers to was the high security Praetorian prison (*Castra Praetoria*) just outside Rome.[41]

What did Paul have in mind, then? More recent treatments of Philippians, which espouse Ephesos for Paul's location, typically suggest he meant the proconsul's headquarters.[42] This is a standard meaning for *praetorium*, certainly.[43] Some have objected, though, usually by citing a comment by F. F. Bruce, that "there is no known instance in imperial times of its use for the headquarters of a proconsul, the governor of a senatorial province such as Asia was at this time."[44] For those clutching a Roman provenance for Philippians, the objection is often recited as a sort of trump card.[45]

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[40] See the important article by Mommsen 1900, especially 437-438.

[41] On the other hand, some scholars who have argued for an Ephesian provenance of Philippians have also interpreted πραιτωρίων as "guard," and point to evidence for military personnel in Ephesos, particularly inscriptions of praetorian guards: *CIL* 3.6085, 7135, 7136. See E.g. Hansen 2009: 23. These arguments for Ephesos are then vulnerable to counterarguments in favor of Rome. Bruce, for instance, responded that the inscriptions often cited for soldiers in Ephesos (*CIL* 3.6085, 7135, 7136) refer to *former* members of the praetorian guard (Bruce 1989:12). Likewise Fee argued that the guard cannot be demonstrated to ever have existed in Ephesos (Fee 1995: 112, n. 25). There is evidence for a significant military presence in Asia, especially Phrygia (Eumeneia, Apamea, etc.) in the first two imperial centuries (Mitchell 1993: 120-21), but this is beside the point; πραιτωρίον in Phil 1:13 does not refer to soldiers.

[42] Thurston 2005: 57; Osiek 2000: 28, 30, 39; Reumann 2008: 166, 171-72; Walter 1998: 38; Müller 1993: 18; Mayer 1986: 13; Hawthorne 2004 [1983]: 38; Thiessen 1995: 119; Barth 1979: 25; Michaelis 1935: 18-19;

[43] See e.g. *OLD* s.v. praetorium 1.c, 1448: "the headquarters of a provincial governor."

[44] The notion was first constructed by F. F. Bruce See Bruce 1989 [1983]: xxii, 11. *Praetorium*, the reasoning goes, instead referred to the *governor's* headquarters in an *imperial* province, which Asia was not, and therefore it must indicate the Praetorian Guard in Rome.

[45] Marshall 1991: x; Bockmuehl 1998: 28; Trebilco 2004: 85-87; Ware 2005: 171-72, n.24; Witherington 2011: 10.

However, the objection is mistaken.[46] For example, the martyrdom of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage clearly shows that the headquarters of the proconsul in the senatorial province of *Africa Proconsularis* was a *praetorium*.[47]

Even so, for Paul's situation defining πραιτωρίον specifically as the proconsul's headquarters (or palace) in Ephesos may still be too restrictive.[48] As many have rightly noted, in the imperial period the term πραιτωρίον /*praetorium* was used for a range of

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[46] The objection is overwrought and constructed far too narrowly to be serviceable. This is one reason why scholars can claim "there is no known instance." Cicero's usage of *praetorium* for the dwelling of the governor in Syracuse, in the Senatorial province of Sicily (Cicero, *Verr*. 4.65, 5.92), one must suppose, is ruled out as "pre-imperial." Reumann (2008: 172) made this helpful observation. Second, the objection hedges itself right into a corner: What *would* the proconsul's headquarters in a senatorial province, such as Asia Minor, be called in imperial times if not *praetorium*? Those who raise the objection can offer no answer. While it is true, moreover, that *praetorium* regularly referred to a governor's headquarters in an *imperial* province, the distinction between the two types of provinces and their respective administrators never determines the usage of "*praetorium*" in the ancient sources. See the discussion concerning the next proconsul of Africa Proconsularis in Tacitus *Ann*. 3.32-34.

[47] According to numerous excerpts in Pontius, when Cyprian was arraigned in 258 CE he was brought to Carthage–the provincial capital of the senatorial province of Africa Proconsularis. There the proconsul Galerius Maximus interrogated Cyprian in the *praetorium* (Pontius, *Vita* 12.2; 15.3-5; 16.2-3, 18.1). The later *Acta Pronconsularia* records that the proconsul called Cyprian into the nearby forecourt (*atrium*) of the Sauciolum, but for his execution Cyprian was led out onto the "estate" (*agrum*) behind the *praetorium* (*post praetorium*), the pronconsular residence (*Acta proconsularia* 5.2; Musurillo 1954: 173-75). For summary and topography see Brent 2010: 3, 20-21, 47-48, and 51. Brent suggests the events occurred in the forum of Carthage, and that the *praetorium* was part of the Antonine basilica (Brent 2010: 47-48). Whatever the case may be, the objection against interpreting the terms as the proconsul's headquarters evaporates.

[48] Underlying the interpretation may also be the idea that Paul was awaiting a trial before the proconsul–fanciful details reminiscent of Acts. So Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 220. In Ephesos, the so-called Byzantine Palace off of Theatre Street (*Plateia in Coressus*) has attracted some attention as possibly the *praetorium* Paul indicated (e.g. Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 220). There are some aspects of the complex– originally known as the "drunken bathhouse" (Sarhoş Hamam)–that may warrant this hypothesis. As it stands the building, which includes *inter alia* private baths, a large courtyard, and a tetraconch hall, was erected over earlier Roman ruins, at least in the northern part; according to excavators, the parts of the Roman wall-paintings that are preserved (Third-Pompeiian Style) date to the early first century CE (Scherrer 2000: 186; Vetters 1966: 278-79. Miltner 1959: 249-50); and most importantly, Hermann Vetters proposed that the tribunal and the basilical-court of the proconsul of Asia were originally part of the complex (Vetters 1966: 280). But the building presents a number archaeological challenges that also deter identifications for the earlier phases. Scherrer (2000: 186) suggests it could be the palace of the Late Antique proconsul; Lavan (1999: 148-49) is doubtful. Recent excavations by Andreas Pülz show that the building was part of a very large complex in the Roman period with a large forecourt extending under the modern parking lot (Pülz 2010: 564-7).

buildings, often associated with Roman administration.[49] Doubtless, Paul referred to a provincial, administrative one. But two possibilities deserve further examination.

The first is more broadly an administrative space in Ephesos. Based on epigraphic sources, the building so described might include the proconsul's headquarters and/ or residence, but it was not limited to that.[50] More to point, a *praetorium* was an administrative space for the pronconsul's staff, along with other magistrates, specifically the *praetor* from which the word *praetorium* derives.[51] Because the proconsul often spent a great deal of time travelling through his province on assize tours, much of the daily governing (e.g. judicial) and administration fell to the *propraetor* and his staff.[52] Some of this activity ordinarily took place in the *praetorium*. Topography is also pertinent for

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[49] Such as a palace, a villa, or the headquarters of a provincial governor. See Osiek 2000: 30, 39; Reumann 2008: 171-72; Dibelius 1937: 64-5. On *praetorium* see the seminal article of Egger 1966. The word could also mean simply a big house. See Statius, *Silv*. 1.3.25; Epictetus, *Dis*. 3.22.47. For imperial *praetoria* as imperial villas see Suetonius *Aug*. 72.3; *Tib*. 39; *Calig*. 37. For its use as palace, see also *Acts of Thomas* 19.10, 19.13. The term *praetorium* could be so flexible, in fact, that even when an ancient author(s) plainly refers to a building using the term, it is not always obvious what kind of building s/he means. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 3.28, Felicitas exclaims: καὶ ἰδοὺ ἡ φυλακὴ ἐμοὶ γέγονεν πραιτώριον, ὡς μᾶλλόν με ἐκεῖ θέλειν εἶναι, καὶ οὐκ ἀλλαχοῦ ("And look, the prison had become a *praetorium* to me, so that I wanted to be there and not somewhere else"). What does she mean? A palace? A big house? The residence of the proconsul? Some other grand civic building?

[50] See for example the plan and *praetorium* of Caesarea Maritima in Segni, Patrich, and Holum 2003: 273-74 and Figures 4-5 at 299-300. Although the *praetorium* under discussion is, like the complex at Epehesos, of the Byzantine period, "the entire *praetorium* with the audience hall, dated to the late 1st century CE, when it was built originally as headquarters of the newly appointed financial procurator of Roman Judea (2003: 273)."

[51] A *praetorium* was the space of or belonging to a *praetor*. In the provinces this would be the *propraetor* (Gk. ἀντιστράτηγος), who ranked just below the proconsul, but could serve for multiple years. It was the noun for the neuter form of the adjective *praetorius*; see *OLD* s.v. *praetorius*, *-a*, *-um* 3.a-b, p. 1448. See also Justinian, *Nov*. 24 on praetors in the provinces: "the places in which they [magistrates as *praetors*] resided or publicly dispensed justice were styled *Pretoria*," (ὅθεν καὶ τὰ δικαστικὰ καταγώγια πραιτώρια καλεῖν ἔταξαν).
See also Johnson et al 1961: 269-70, 271.

[52] So we have such titles such as "propraetorian legate of the provinces of Achaia and Asia" (*IvE* 3.620, *ll*. 12 and 21). See also *IvE* 7,2.5102-3 (*l*. 11).

identifying personnel. The *praetorium* was sometimes an "official" space within or adjoining to a larger, semi-official building-complex such as a *basilica*.[53] A basilica structure was, after all, the place where a Roman magistrate charged with the administation of justice, namely a (*pro*)*praetor*, could hold his court. And in the Greek civic world, a basilica had a similar offical, or administrative function to a Roman *praetorium*.[54] In legal thought but no less in civic life, the two terms were related,[55] and in some case they could be nearly synonymous.[56] Accordingly, other functionaries besides the *proconsul* or *propraetor* must have been around or had access to the administrative space.[57] These would have included some public slaves (*servi publici*/ δοῦλοι δημόσιοι),[58] as well as some imperial slaves and freedmen, as part of the imperial administration. Hence, the term Paul uses in Phil 1:13 does not indicate, as some have

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[53] The "stoa-basilica" in the Upper Agora of Ephesos, donated by Gaius Sextilius Pollio in the early first century CE (*IvE* 2.404), replaced an earlier one-aisled stoa. The somewhat rare phrase "stoa-basilica" means "royal portico," as one would expect given the etymology of the term *basilica*. "It is plausible that the name basilica was used as a name for this kind of building in general as it usually was a grand building in which official affairs took place and therefor the link to royalty or leadership seemed appropriate" (Raja 2012: 68-70, and n.269).

[54] E.g. Josephus, *Ant*. 12.5.260 uses the tern fir "keeping house," or "managing, administering affairs (οἱ τὰ βασιλικὰ διοικοῦντες). See the officials in *P.Amh*. 2.68 (*ll* 45-47), 89-92 CE, especially the phrase: τὸν στρατηγὸν κ(αὶ) βασιλικὸν. Offical personnel could be called simply βασιλικὸς as in *P.Dura* 19 (88-89CE).

[55] The account of Cyprian's martyrdom discloses this as well. Other ancient sources which locate the *praetorium* within the context of a forum and its standard civic features (Gk. ἀγορά). See *Historia Augusta*, Aurelian. 45.2; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 15.2.27-30.

[56] Consider Ulpian's discussion on the *imperium* of a praetor and interdicts on buildings in public places: "Some roads are public, some private, some local. We mean [i.e. Latin speaking Romans] by public roads what the Greeks call 'basilican' (βασιλικάς), and our people (call it) 'praetorian' (*praetorias*) or consular roads." Viarum quaedam publicae sunt, quaedam privatae, quaedam vicinales. Publicas vias dicimus, quas Graeci βασιλικάς, nostri praetorias, alii consulares vias appellant; Ulpian, *Digest* 43.8.2.22.

[57] E.g. deptuy officials or managers like the procurator, as well as magistrates like the *quaestor*–a treasury official or aide to the proconsul.

[58] They also carried out an assortment of civic assignments: clerks, personal assistants to judges, secretaries of associations of slaves, managers of weights and measures, archivists, administrators in gymnasia, or assistants in temples. For duties see Weiss 2004: 29-36, and 114-16. For public slaves in Ephesos see the edict of the proconsul Paullus Fabius Persicus from 44 CE (*IvE* 1.17-19).

claimed, a "technical sense" of "palace guard" in Rome.[59] Rather, it probably indicated a more Romanized (Latin) toponym in his provincial Greek city.

The second possibility, which scholars have rarely if ever entertained, is that Paul's πραιτωρίον referred to the lodging of Roman administrative officials travelling, or temporarily residing, outside of Ephesos proper.[60] A governor, proconsul, military official, other magistrates or other personnel such as a "large official entourage" could stay in a *praetorium* while out doing business in the province. The *praetorium* structure in this sense was thus not the central headquarters of Roman administration in the provincial capital itself. Rather, as part of the facilities for official operations it was the *local* office; it was the "government house" in various areas of a province, whether imperial or senatorial. The modern comparison would be a consulate or consular offices. Often such a *praetorium* could be a functional counterpart to a *taberna*, both of which are terms commonly found on ancient itineraries and maps, which set out the rest stations and staging posts along the roads of the Empire.[61] For example, an inscription dating to 61 CE from Mihilci, Thrace (modern Mihiltsi, Bulgaria) records that Nero ordered "*tabernas et praetoria* to be made along military roads, by way of Titus Julius Ustus, procurator of the province of Thrace."[62] Other copies of the text were found elsewhere in Butchino, Thracia and Ithiman, Thracia.[63] These *praetoria*, which emperors sometimes

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[59] Bruce 1989: 11.
[60] *OLD* s.v. *praetorium*, 1.d, p. 448
[61] Mitchell 1978: 95 and n.17.
[62] *CIL* 3.6123
[63] *AE* 1912, 193; *AE* 1999, 1397.

ordered local communities to build under the auspices of magistrates, were on both military roads (*viae militares*) and main routes, or "public roads" (*viae publicae*).[64] They were also located in the heart of cities.

An important example comes from Philippi's sister colony Dium (*Colonia Iulia Augusta Diensis*). In 1999 an inscription was discovered stating that a local magistrate (*duovir*), a priestess of Minerva, and two other Roman citizens "from their own money, for all the colonists, had constructed and dedicated the *praetorium* with the two *tabernae* and the provisions written below." Originally, the inscription would have been publicized on the building itself. Subsequent excavations, in fact, identified the building.[65] According to the reports the location of the *praetorium* building within the urban plan is particularly significant: it is very close to the two largest roads of Dium, the agora, and the "richest house" excavated hitherto, while public toilets and baths were available nearby.[66]

In another case, an epitaph on a grave altar (*cippus*) found near Placentia (modern Piacenza) in northern Italy records that a Publius Aelius Prothymus, an imperial freedman (of Hadrian), and bookkeeper (*tabularius*) of the 5% inheritance tax for the provinces of Aemilia, Liguria, Transpadana, "erected this *praetorium* with the baths by

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[64] Kolb 2011/2012: 62, also 54-5. And as a comparison, see the *taberna* that Quintus Orfitasius Aufidius Umbrus, procurator of Galatia, constructed in 102 CE. It was a staging post on the *via Sebaste*, a road linking Iconium with Pisidian Antioch (*AE* 1979, 620).
[65] *AE* 2000, 1295.
[66] Pandermalis 2002: 103-7.

himself."[67] Prothymus' *cippus* would certainly have been in sight of the *praetorium* he erected, if not inside the building itself.[68] The *praetorium* also had private baths for the guest to use–not an uncommon perk for *praetoria*.[69] Additionally, an edict of Sextus Sotidius Strabo Libuscidianus, governor of Galatia in the time of Tiberius, shows that some imperial slaves and freedmen were imperially-sanctioned travellers along with or in the same manner as provincial officials–including the governor himself.[70] Emperors had their slaves and freedmen everywhere–in Asia, a senatorial province, just as in the bordering imperial province of Galatia–and some could most likely use the local *praetorium* just as official magistrates. In other words, there were numerous local *praetoria* associated with administrative operations in all these provinces, including the senatorial province of Asia.

This second possibility for πραιτώριον means that Paul may not have been in Ephesos when he wrote to the Philippians, though still in Asia Minor. He could have been somewhere in the Ephesian *chora*, or elsewhere in the province, along important roads or in other cities. We know Paul had "opportunites" in other places in Asia Minor,

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[67] *CIL* 11.1222. For another similar *praetorium* from Amiternum, Samnium, Italy (modern San Vittorino) see *CIL* 9.4195.

[68] If the inscription originally comes from Placentia, the *praetorium* was probably inside the city; if in the vicinity of Placentia, it would have perhaps been located off the *Via Aemilia*, the major road leading into the city.

[69] See, for example, the edict of Septimius Severus concerning the *praetoria* of Pizos in northeastern Thrace, *SIG*^{2} 880 lines 49-60; *IGRR* 1.766.

[70] *AE* 1976, 653=*AE* 1978, 789. The bilingual edict, details regulations concerning the transport that communities in Pisidia (particularly Sagalassus) had to provide civilian and military officials. The final section (Lines 23-5, 49-51) of the edict reads: "Shelter and hospitality should be provided without payment for all members of my own staff, for persons on military service from other provinces, and for freedmen and slaves of the best princes (Lat.)/ of the emperor (Gk.) and for the animals of these persons, in such a way that these do not exact other services without payment from people who are unwilling." Translation adapted from Mitchell 1976: 109, for discussion see 127.

like the coastal Roman colony of Alexander Troas. He later he set out from there for Macedonia and seems to have come again to Philippi (2 Cor. 2:12-13).[71]

Whichever *praetorium* one chooses as the most likely for Paul's πραιτώριον, it is important to recognize that Paul was not necessarily imprisoned there. As in Cyprian's case the *praetorium* was not a prison, and besides, Paul says he is in chains. It was the *chains* that had become known "throughout the whole *praetorium* and in all other places,"[72] and this may suggest detainment more than outright incarceration (ἐν φυλακαῖς; 2 Cor 6:5, 11:23).[73] He could have been chained up in a number of places locally and even have been moderately mobile.[74] Therefore, it is possible that Paul encountered and communicated with members of Caesar's household because they were somehow associated with the *praetorium* as a civic space in the capital or a municipal space in the province. This is only one of several possibilities for how Paul came across these persons, however. In the end we simply do not know.

A Note on the 'Epigraphic Habit' East and West

One final argument needs briefer treatment. Besides the "*praetorium*" in Phil 1:13, the phrase "Caesar's household" in Phil 4:22 has been the second internal locator for Paul.

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[71] White 2004: 204-5, 207, 209.

[72] This was the standard translation before Lightfoot.

[73] Manson points out that the phrase "my chains" (Phil 1:7) does no refer specifically to an imprisonment in Ephesos or that Paul is actually in prison. However, Manson goes too far by suggesting that Paul was writing about a "trial" in the past (1962: 151-53).

[74] Herod Agrippa, for instance, was bound (δεῖν) and led in chains (δεσμός) back from Tusculanum to Rome. There he stood enchained under a tree before the palace, along with others who where in chains, for an undisclosed period of time before he was finally incarcerated in prison proper (Josephus, *Ant*. 18.6.6-7).

For certain reasons–not least of which were the 'needs' of the emperor and his family at home–there were probably more imperial slaves and freedmen in Rome than anywhere else. In the past this statistical 'fact' has been used to bolster the idea that Paul must have written Philippians from Rome.[75] As one scholar put it: Caesar's Household was especially "at home" in Rome, whereas one must look under all kinds of "stones" to turn up evidence for their existence in Ephesos.[76]

Yet, such positions are rife with problems. The sheer number of imperial slaves or freedmen in a geographic location is, to a certain extant, simply irrelevant for the provenance of Philippians. Imperial personnel were everywhere in the known Roman world, and tallying them is a simplistic way to pinpoint Paul. But these arguments also misunderstand the idiosyncrasies of the epigraphic habit and are dismissive of the evidence for imperial personnel in Ephesos. For this reason, here would be an opportune place to review some of the patterns for material culture distribution. The exercise may also show the rationale for my own use of epigraphy in the following section.

Imperial slaves and freedpersons are known principally from their epigraphy, the vast majority of which are Latin epitaphs. The epigraphic record for imperial slaves and

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[75] Bo Reicke argued that it was impossible for the readers of Philippians to misunderstand the reference to Rome and Nero's clients in the greeting from 'those of Caesar's household' (Phil 4:22). "Clients and servants of the emperor lived in several places, but primarily in Rome…Paul is happy to be able to extend greetings from clients of the imperial house to the readers in Philippi" (1970: 285-6). Bruce suggested that Caesar's household meant *freedmen* in the imperial civil service. These were found far and wide throughout the provinces, "but nowhere was there such a concentration of them as in Rome–a concentration large enough to include a significant proportion of converts to the Christian faith" (1989: 157-8). Meeks, too, opted for a Roman provenance "most likely" based on "the household of Caesar" in Phil. 4:22 (2003 [1983]: 63). More recently Witherington 2011: 287.

[76] Fee 1995: 459. But Fee never deals with the phrase "Caesar's Household" in any way except to assert that it is an "unnatural reading of the text" to argue as some do that 'Caesar's Household' "does not necessarily mean the presence of Caesar's household as such (1995: 459).

freedpersons at Ephesos, or anywhere else in the provinces for that matter, pales in comparison to the record at Rome. But the imperial capital was the epicenter of the epigraphic habit; it has preserved the majority of *all* Latin inscriptions for the imperial period by a large margin, whether imperial slave or not.[77] Yet the epigraphic record in Ephesos is nonetheless strong enough to indicate that it was a major center for imperial personnel.

For a provisionary sense of scale I have charted imperial slaves and freedpersons known in Ephesos from the first century BCE through the first century CE, as well as imperial personnel in major centers of Asia Minor for the whole imperial period (See Tables 1 and 2). The total number of imperial personnel in Julio-Claudian Ephesos (9 or 10, depending on the restoration of a lacuna) may appear underwhelming. But by immediate comparison, the city of Smyrna, an illustrious city in its own right, has yielded–as far as I could gather–only a single imperial slave or freedperson inscription for the whole imperial period. Telesephoros Julianos, an imperial slave in the Flavian

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[77] For numerical and geographic distribution see Beltrán Lloris 2015: 137-40. In one study, the total number of Greek and Latin inscriptions over a millennium and a half (800BCE-700CE) is 600,000 (Bodel 2001:4). *CIL* volume 6, representing Rome, has some 54,000 Latin inscriptions, not counting the *instrumentum domesticum* (Bodel 2001: 162). For geographic distributions between West and East and explanations see also Meyer 1990: 91-5. Moreover, the presence of an inscription in a particular area does not mean that the person spent a lot of time there. Some inscriptions of imperial personnel discovered in Rome, and catalogued as Roman, record that the person actually died elsewhere. Such is the case of the imperial freedman of Trajan, Marcus Ulpius Phaedimus who died at Selinus (modern Sellinunte), on the southern coast of Sicily, but whose remains were later brought to Rome (*CIL* 6.1884). Others record that the person(s) lived, worked, or travelled elsewhere before coming to and dying in Rome. Thus was the imperial freedman Saturninus who was procurator of the inheritance tax in Achaea in the mid to late first century CE (*CIL* 6.8442). Additionally, the presence of extant inscriptions of imperial personnel from Rome is also related to the unique method by which they were preserved: namely, collectively in the cavernous *columbaria* of early imperial Rome. See Borbonus 2014: 1-10, and 53. The pages of *CIL* 6.2 (published in 1882) are filled with epitaphs of imperial slaves and freedmen taken directly from the huge quantity of sepulchral stones being unearthed at the time (Bodel 2001: 162).

period, erected a tomb for his partner Claudia Olympia (*IK* 23,1.225). Pergamum, the old capital of the region, yielded only two from the imperial period, one of which is second century. Considering that across the Empire the Julio-Claudian era also affords far fewer inscriptions than the later period,[78] the number for Ephesos is all the more significant. Overall, the epigraphic footprint of imperial personnel in Ephesos, whether in the first, second, or third century, is bigger than in any other city of Asia Minor. Typical of the epigraphic habit, imperial freedmen are the most visible in Ephesos. They had a monumental presence in the capital from very beginning of the *principate* as the triple-gate of Mazeus and Mithridates in the commercial agora unmistakably attests.[79] The emperor's freedmen were foundational in other ways as well, as we shall see. Like the tip of an iceberg they were the upper level of a network beneath which flowed many more imperial slaves, who are less visible in the material record–again typical of the epigraphic habit.[80]

Epigraphic quantity by itself is not sufficient, however. Recognizing the nature of the imperial personnel, and the forces that led to their appearance in Ephesos is also important. When Augustus made Ephesos the new capital of Asia, and the residence of the proconsul a plethora of administrative and commercial demands–great and small–

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[78] The epigraphic habit seems to have peaked in the Severan period (MacMullen 1982: 243). Based on the number of inscriptions, more imperial slaves and freedpersons seemed to have moved to or worked in Ephesos in the second century CE, whether due to bureaucratic changes in the Antonine period or other demographic factors. See White 1995b.

[79] *IvE* 7,1.3006; *IvE* 7,1.3006 and *IvE* 3.851.

[80] For various reasons most of these left no material trace in the provinces. See Bruun 2015: 617.

opened in service of the "imperial economy."[81] The census, land and/or resource allocation, natural resource exploitation, supply systems, complex taxation and tribute levying, collection, and documentation all required a considerable network of sub-elite, working people.[82] The paperwork must have been incredible. For the many tasks involved in such an enterprise, the emperors would put up their personal property and former property in the form of their slaves and freedmen. The majority who worked in Ephesos were probably "sub-clerical" imperial slaves–footmen (*pedisequi*), attendants or guards (*custodes*), heralds or monitors (*nomenclatores*), secretaries or clerks (*notarius*/ νοτάριος), and couriers (*tabellarius*/ ταβελλάριος);[83] as well as "clerical" imperial slaves or freedmen–assistants (*adiutor*/ βοηθός),[84] bookkeepers (*tabularius*/ ταβλάριος),[85] record-keepers (*commentarius*), tax-collectors (*exactor*),[86] under-slaves (*vicarius*/οὐ(ε)ικάριος),[87] cashiers (*arcarius*/ ἀρκάριος),[88] and account managers or stewards (*dispensator*/ οἰκονόμος/ ταμίας).[89] Western Asia Minor also experienced regional and interregional developments–a demographic and urban boom both in the population of existing cities

[81] The exact date when Ephesos became the capital of the senatorial province of Asia is unknown but it happened under Augustus c. 30/29 BCE, after the Battle of Actium when he seized control of the East from Antony; Raja 2012: 55, n.197 and 57, n.215.
[82] Mattingly 2010: 138, 142; Zuiderhoek 2009: 115; van Nijf 2009: 285, 289.
[83] *IvE* 3.696; 3.855; 6.2200a; 6.2281a; 6.2222b; 7,2.4112;
[84] *IvE* 3.651; 3.680; 3.736; 4.1285; 6.2061;7,1.3046.
[85] *IvE* 2.297a; 3.651; 3.820; 5.1564; 4.1138; 6.2103; 6.2480; 6.2903; 7,1.3054.
[86] *IvE* 3.647.
[87] *IvE* 5.1948a; 5.1993; 6.2270.
[88] *IvE* 3.809; 3.861; 5.1951a; 6.2200a.
[89] *IvE* 3.652; 3.809; 5.1948a; 5.1993; 6.2255a; 6.2270.

(e.g. Ephesos) and the total number of poleis.[90] As the "Customs Law of Asia" (62 CE) affirms, Ephesos was "the biggest *emporion* of Western Asia Minor," the regional center of a provincial and extra-provincial economy, which the imperial economy intersected.[91] Imperial personnel were not fixed to Ephesos; they left traces everywhere in the province. But these tectonic movements ensured a steady migration of imperial slaves and freedmen into the "First and Greatest Metropolis of Asia." And it is within this bustling administrative and commercial context that "Caesar's household" (Phil 4:22) developed.

[90] Ephesos grew "daily" according to Strabo (*Geog*. 14.1.24); Pleket 1994: 119, 121; Cottier and Corbier 2008: 1-10, 26-85. Parrish and Abbasoğlu 2001.
[91] Pleket 1994: 119; Mattingly 2010: 138-39.

Table 1. Imperial Slaves and Freedpersons in Ephesos: First-Century BCE to First-Century CE

Name	Descriptor(s)	Date	Source(s)
Gaius Julius Nicephorus	• imperial freedman • *prytanis* • *conventus civium Romanorum* member	1st cent. BCE	*IvE* 6.859 (Greek)
Gaius Julius […]	• imperial freedman • patron for synod (*conventus civium Romanorum*?) • donations for Roma and Artemis	1st cent. BCE (50-27 BCE)	*IvE* 6.859a; (Greek) Engelmann 1990: 92-94.
Gaius Julius […]	• imperial freedman • tomb for family (son and wife)	1st cent. BCE–1st cent. CE	*IvE* 6.2272 (Bilingual)
Mazeus	• imperial freedman • monumental benefactor	4-3 BCE	*IvE* 7,1.3006 (Bilingual)
Mithridates	• imperial freedman • monumental benefactor	4-3 BCE early-1st cent. CE	*IvE* 7,1.3006 *IvE* 3.851 (Bilingual)
Successus	• imperial freedman	1st cent. CE	*IvE* 6.2210 (Bilingual)
Ampliatus	• house-born slave of Successus, imperial freedman • died 19 years old	1st cent. CE	*IvE* 6.2210 (Latin)
Eutychus	• imperial slave *dispensator*	1st cent. BCE-1st cent. CE (*ostotheke*)	*IvE* 6.2255a (Latin)
Zmaragdus	• *dispensator* (imperial slave)	1st cent. BCE-1st cent. CE	*IvE* 6.2270 (Latin_
Ikarus	• slave (*vicarius*) of unnamed *dispensator*	1st cent. BCE-1st cent. CE (*ostotheke*)	*IvE* 6.2270 (Latin) H. Engelmann - D. Knibbe, *JOAI* 52, 1978/80, 58, Nr. 123.
Eutactus	• imperial freedman • procurator (inheritance tax) of Asia and Lycia	80 CE	*IvE* 2.262 (Bilingual)

Table 2: Imperial Slaves and Freedpersons in Asia Minor: Geo-Chronological Distribution

Location	Name	Descriptor(s)	Date	Source
Pergamum, Mysia	Latinus	• imperial freedman	1st cent. CE (Flavian)	*SEG* 59, 1497
Pergamum, Mysia	Carpophorus	• imperial freedman • *tabularius* of the province of Asia Minor	2nd cent. CE	*AvP* 8,3.107
Nacolea, Phrygia	Unknown	• slave of Germanicus (Καίσαρος Γερμανικοῦ...δοῦλος) • epitaph for son Philo	18CE or soon after	*MAMA* 5.201 (Greek)
Nacolea, Phrygia	Craterus	• slave (*Caesaris nostril servus*) • tax collector (*exactor*) of the *res publica* of Nacolea • *pro salute* inscription for Commodus and Craterus by citizens of Nacolea	180-192 CE (Antonine)	*MAMA* 5.197 (Latin)
Nacolea, Phrygia	Publius Aelius Onesimus	• freedman (*Augusti libertus*) • will (*ex testament*) • distributions for homeland of Nacolea (*patria mea amantissima*) on birthday of Hadrian	•117-138 CE (Hadrianic)	*MAMA* 5.202
Synnada, Phrygia	Hyacinthus	• slave • *tabularius* • imperial quarries • wife from Arruntii family	54-68 CE (Neronian)	*MAMA* 4.53 (Bilingual)
Lysias, Phrygia	Amion (woman) Diadoumenos (man)	• slave (Καίσαρος δούλη) sets up tomb (τὸ ἡρῶον) for her partner (ἀνήρ) • slave	Unkown	*MAMA* 4.114 (Greek)

Table 2 (continued)

		(Καίσαρος δοῦλος)		
Synnada, Phrygia	Amiantus	• freedman (*Augusti libertus*) • note-keeper/ record keeper (*a commentaris*) • epitaph for Flavia Eutychia (mother)	1st-2nd cent. CE (Flavian)	*MAMA* 4.62 (Latin)
Synnada, Phrygia	Titus Aelius […]	• freedman (*Augusti libertus*) • house-born slave (*verna*) • procurator • honorary inscription for Antoninus Pius	138-160 CE (Antonine)	*MAMA* 4.55 (Latin)
Laodikeia Combusta, Pisidia	Thalamos (man) Chreste (woman)	• slaves (κυρίων Καισάρων δοῦλοι) • epitaph/ tomb while living (ζῶντες)	Unkown	*MAMA* 1.29
Dionysopolis, Phrygia	Dokimos	• slave of Domitia Augusta (Δομιτίας Σεβαστῆς δοῦλος) • donates materials for building	90 CE or later	*MAMA* 4.293 (Greek)
Hadrianopolis, Phrygia	Kosimos	• house-born slave (κυρίου Καίσαρος οὐέρνα) • peace-keeper, guard (εἰρηνάρχη) • votive for the Greatest God (Διὶ Μεγίστῳ)	2nd cent. CE or later	*MAMA* 7.135 (Greek)
Tyriaion, Phrygia	Marcus Aurelius Eukleides	• freedman ([ἀπελεύθερος Καίσα]ρος) • votive for the Greatest God (Διὶ Μεγίστῳ)	2nd cent. CE or later	*MAMA* 7.107 (Greek)

Table 2 (continued)

Galatia (mod. Insuyu)	Aur(elius) Epagathus	• freedman (Σεββαστῶν ἀπελεύθερος) • supplier of the records office/ registrar (ἰνστρουμεντάριος ταβουλαρίων) • epitaph/ tomb for himself and free wife while living (ζῶν)	2nd cent. CE or later (late-Antonine)	*MAMA* 7.524 (Greek)
Galatia (mod. Kuyulu Zebir)	Julianus	• house-born slave (οὐέρνα τῶν Σεββ(αστῶν) • epitaph (?)	Unknown (prob. 2nd cent. CE or later)	*MAMA* 7.544 (Greek)
Pisidia, Galatia	Theophilus	• freedman (Σεβαστοῦ ἀπελεύθερος) • procurator (ἐπίτροπος) • epitaph for Kalligenos, house-born slave/ foundling (θρεπτός)	Unknown (prob. 2nd cent. CE or later)	*MAMA* 8.341
Tabai, Caria	Publius Aelius Parthenokleos	• freedman (Καίσαρος ἀπελεύθερος) • epitaph on sarcophagus	120-135 CE or later (Hadrianic)	*MAMA* 6.170 (Greek)
Laodikeia	Tiberius Claudius Trypho	• freedman • triple gateway donation	84-5 CE (Domitianic)	*ILaodLyk* I.24=*MAMA* 6.2 (Bilingual)
Smyrna, Ionia	Telesphoros Julianus	• imperial slave (δοῦλος Καίσαρος) • tomb for wife (?) Claudia Olympia	Flavian	*ISmyrna* I.225
Alexander Troas, Troad	[…]	• imperial freedman • honorary inscription for Septimius Severus	• 193-211 CE	*IK* 53.25

CESAR'S HOUSEHOLD: A PROFILE

Since epigraphic catalogues became available in the nineteenth century, many have rightly noted, like Deissmann, that Paul's expression ἡ Καίσαρος οἰκία (Phil 4:22) did not mean the physical living space of the Roman emperor in Rome or his biological family.[92] Now most scholars suggest Paul was talking about the emperor's slaves and freedmen in the imperial bureaucracy. But more precision is necessary for deciphering who exactly comprised Caesar's household, what their status was, what they were doing, and how they were associated with one another. Although there are limitations, we can narrow the possibilities and begin to sketch a profile.

First, Paul's "Caesar's household" probably did not include imperial freedmen, as many scholars have wondered or supposed.[93] As we saw in the last chapter, the terms *familia* and *Caesaris* doubly emphasized an enslaved group. So the rather rare phrase *familia Caesaris* (ἡ Καίσαρος οἰκία) denoted a particular group (a *familia*) of imperial slaves, and not all the emperor's slaves and freedmen collectively.[94] The slaves were usually associated as a *familia* because of intersecting networks. They lived and worked

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[92] Credit goes to Lightfoot 1958 [1868]: 171-73.

[93] Reumann 2008: 739; Ascough 2003: 119; Meggitt 1998: 126; Stegemann and Stegemann 1999 [1995]: 293. Thurston (2005: 161) suggests erroneously that the "house of Caesar" would include the praetorian guard of Phil 1:13. Even if we imagine the group did have freed members or some who managed to become free in time, there are no grounds for supposing Paul referred to the top-level imperial freedmen administrators, or to persons who even had a chance of reaching such powerful positions. The upper level, imperial freedmen bureaucrats were only a "tiny privileged minority" (Millar 1977: 69). Stegemann and Stegemann 1999 [1995]: 60, 72, 391 suggest that the *familia Caesaris*, and by extension, the people from the *familia Caesaris* who receive greetings in Phil 4:22 belonged to the retainers of the "upper stratum" in the Roman social pyramid. But placing, *en bloc*, all imperial slaves and freedmen just beneath the elite, upper-stratum groups makes the distance between the two levels seem closer and more permeable than the reality.

[94] Weaver 1972: 52, 54, 300; Schumacher 2011: 591-92. Compare Thiessen 1995: 119, Gnilka 1980: 182.

in the same area, they had similar ethnic ties, and they shared labor, cults, or family connections.[95] Although some of the persons Paul references may have subsequently been manumitted as imperial freedpersons, it is more likely that Caesar's household was a discrete and local cluster of imperial slaves.

Second, the descriptor *familia*/ ἡ οἰκία implies complex social texture and kinship structures among "Caesar's household." A spatially defined "household" group and a genealogically defined "family" is an artificial differentiation that often does not reflect social practice.[96] Over time, through everyday action and shared networks, a "culture of relatedness" allowed imperial slaves who lived and worked together to form kinship groupings.[97] This was a *familia Caesaris*. In terms of demography, probably not all persons in the group were adult male functionaries in the imperial bureaucracy. Despite the legal restrictions imperial slaves regularly took slave and free marital partners (*contubernalis*/ συμβίος) in their work area.[98] What is more, imperial slaves and freedmen could, and did, own their own personal slaves–some had a considerable number–and these slaves were also included in the emperor's larger family/household network.[99] Thus, the *familia Caesaris* Paul mentions likely included imperially-owned women as

[95] See also the discussions in Harders 2012: 15.
[96] Harders 2012: 15.
[97] See Harders 2012: 15, 19; See also White 2003: 464 and n.36.
[98] See e.g. *AE* 1947, 77= *SEG* 21, 1058 from the agora of late-first century Athens.
[99] Weaver 1972: 207, 209. Many of them were women.

well,[100] whether as freeborn wives or daughters of imperial slaves,[101] possibly even as managers of other imperial slaves in that *familia*.[102] Naturally, young enslaved persons (girls and boys) could also have been part of the Caesar's household Paul references. House-born slaves (*vernae*) are well-attested in the ancient sources, and such slaves could also be adopted foundlings (*alumnus*/ θρεπτός).[103]

We can glimpse some of the social and kinship networks among imperial personnel in first-century Ephesos. A certain Ampliatus, for example, is recorded as the house-born slave or foundling (*verna*/ βέρνα) of Successus, an imperial freedman.[104] We have no information about the work Successus performed in Ephesos or elsewhere since his name does not include an occupational title. He is identified only as an imperial freedman of an unspecified emperor, thus he may not have held an official post (*officium*/ ὀφικίον) after his manumission. He could have owned multiple slaves. But if Ampliatus

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[100] This point is rarely made among New Testament scholars. A welcome exception is Stegemann and Stegemann 1999 [1995]: 391. As a whole, imperial slaves (and freedpersons) were predominantly male, at least based on the epigraphic record. See Weaver 1972: 170-78.

[101] Most often, imperial slave women are recorded as wives or daughters. For example, Tunis, Africa Proconsularis: Felicula Caesaris n(ostri) / serva pia vixit annis XXV / Festus pater et Epityncha/nus conservus eius de / suo fecerunt h(ic) s(ita) e(st)(*CIL* 8.1129); from Thebeste, Numidia: D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / Hospita / C(a)es(aris) n(ostri) ser(va) / vix(it) an(nos) XXX / Mario uxori / piissimai fec(it) (*AE* 1957,181); Thessalonica: Restitutae Caesar(is) / n(ostri) servae vixit ann(os) / XII Restitutus et An/this fil(iae) b(ene) merenti (*IG* X,2 1 740). Sometimes their husbands were also imperial slaves and have an occupational designation (*tabularius*, *tabellarius*). For example from Carthage: D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / Gallus Caes(aris) n(ostri) ser(vus) tab(ularius) pius / vixit an(nos) XXVIII dies XII / Eugenia Caes(aris) n(ostri) ser(va) uxor / item vix(it) an(nos) XXVIII m(enses) III / h(ic) s(itus) e(st) (*CIL* 8.12630); similarly: D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / Felix Caesaris n(ostri) / ser(vus) Donatae fil(ius) / tabellarius pius / vixit annis plus / minus XXXX Victo/ria conserva fecit / h(ic) s(itus) e(st) (*CIL* 8.12629)

[102] In at least one example from the first century from Calama, Africa Proconsularis: Saturn/ina Ti(beri) / Claudi / Cae(saris) vil(ica) / vix(it) a(nnos) XXX / et Venu/sta f(ilia) vi(xit) / a(nnos) XV h(ic) / e(st) s(ita) (*CIL* 8.5384).

[103] *IPOstie* A, 279=*ISIS* 127

[104] *CIL* 3.436=*IvE* 6.2210=*GRIA* 30.

was born enslaved, and since children took the status of their mother, at minimum Sucessus must have owned one other female slave. Sucessus may even have been the biological father of Ampliatus who died young, aged nineteen. As was common, another slave (*conservus/a*) in his Ampliatus' kinship network likely commissioned his epitaph.[105] The size of the marble block (52 x 52 cm) suggests that Sucessus, or the dedicator at least, had surplus funds.

Third, because the group that Paul mentions lived and worked in the eastern Mediterranean, at least some of them would have possessed the professional skills and the social networks that the urban, provincial settings of Greek Asia Minor entailed. As part of the imperial bureaucracy the skills included particularly those related to financial administration–taxes and expenditures–but also public services such as aqueducts, libraries, correspondences, roads, public works and buildings, as well as imperial projects such as mines and marble quarries.[106] Further, those in "Caesar's household" who worked in the imperial bureaucracy would be generally mid- to lower-level imperial slaves who had already achieved some upward mobility in the system, though were probably at their limit.[107] The bulk of all imperial slaves and freedpersons worked in the

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[105] For example, compare, this text from Carthage: Our pious slave of Caesar, Aucta, lived 28 years. Here she lies. Dionysius her fellow-slave made because she is worthy. Aucta Caes(aris) n(ostri) ser(va) / pia vixit an(nos) XXIIX / h(ic) s(ita) e(st) / Dyonysius conser(vus) / o(b) m(erita) f(ecit) (*CIL* 8.12687); see also *CIL* 8.1129. From Rome, a (slave) doctor of the emperor Domitian is commemorated by his friend and fellow-slave Fructus (*AE* 2007,236). Similarly, from Samnium, although the fellow imperial slaves are still living (*AE* 1989, 234).

[106] Weaver 1972: 7.

[107] This does not mean they were at the end of their life. The immense number of other slaves in the emperor's holdings, the diminishing number of positions higher up in the system, and the average life expectancy–forty-years would be an aggressive estimate–were all continual barriers to "brilliant" careers.

"sub-clerical" or "clerical" positions–see the list above.[108] Since these were the more skilled labor they were already ahead of the curve and deemed worthy of an occupational designation on a stone.[109] On balance, therefore, fantastically rich and powerful imperial freedmen like Narcissus, Pallas, and Epaphroditus are not the best analogues for deciphering "Caesar's household" in Phil 4:22 or for understanding their upward mobility.[110] On the other hand, we should not unilaterally devalue the living conditions and prospects of these imperial slaves either.[111]

Fourth, the evidence that exists from first-century Ephesos, and certainly from Ephesos in the following century, points to an array of work in imperial finance (*fiscus*) among imperial slaves; under them existed an extensive but largely invisible retinue of other slaves.[112] In my view, this is a key characteristic of Caesar's household (Phil 4:22), whether in Ephesos or elsewhere in Asia Minor.[113] Financial work fits what we know about others in Paul's larger social field.

An important clue for placing the kinds of imperial slaves in Caesar's household, though not necessarily "saints" among them, is Erastus from Corinth (Rom 16:23).

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[108] Weaver 1972: 224, 227; Bodel 2011: 330.

[109] Bodel 2011: 326-7. See discussion in Chapter 1: in such clerical and sub-clerical "grades" the position recorded on an inscription is "the highest post actually reached by the *end* of a career," and for some "posts" (e.g. couriers) there was no expectation for further advancement (Weaver 1972: 224, 227 and D'Arms 1975: 338).

[110] Martin 1990: 30-31; Meeks 2003 [1983]: 22.

[111] Meggitt 1998: 126 writes, "Whilst high level bureaucrats enjoyed a prosperous existence, the overwhelming majority of members of the Imperial household were employed in menial domestic or agricultural occupations. Most had little directly to do with the Emperor himself or his court, finding themselves in the rather less prestigious situation of being freedmen or slaves or Imperial freedmen (or even, indeed, of Imperial slaves)."

[112] See types of imperial personnel at Ephesos listed above.

[113] Deissmann made this point long ago (1927 [1908]: 160).

Although he in not an imperial slave, of all the people Paul names in his letters, Erastus is the only case in which he includes some occupational information; he calls Erastus ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως. Though there has been debate on the identity and position of Erastus, he was most likely a public slave (*servi publici*/ (δοῦλοι) δημόσιοι), as others have convincingly argued.[114] As we saw previously, *servi publici* formed groups analogous to *familia Caesaris*, but the former served the colony–in this case Corinth–instead of the emperor and the provincial administration. Within the wide range of duties that public slaves had to perform, which, the reader will recall, were comparable and consonant with imperial slaves in provincial centers, an οἰκονόμος seems to have been somewhere in the middle area. Hence, Erastus probably had a low to mid-level financial position in Corinth's bureaucracy.[115] Likewise, Tertius ("number three") the scribe Paul used to write to the Romans (Rom 16: 22) and Quartus ("number four," Rom 16:23) are also analogues for Caesar's household. Both may have been slaves or freedmen in the household of Erastus,[116] or slaves who worked under (*vicarius*) Erastus in Corinth's financial administration.

Both Erastus and Quartus have parallels among imperial slaves in Paul's context. A counterpart for Erastus's position is a *dispensator*, as an inscription from an imperial slave at Chios shows.[117] A *dispensator* was typically a slave, and the work performed,

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[114] Friesen 2010: 249 and Meggitt 1996: 218-223.
[115] Friesen 2010: 249.
[116] Friesen 2010: 253.
[117] Friesen 2010: 248. Chios, Bithynia (modern Gemlik), late-first, or early-second century bilingual inscription records that a certain Genealis, house-born imperial slave (*verna*), was a *dispensator*/ οἰκονόμος

usually in the provinces, could entail a range of duties–almost always unspecified in the inscriptions. But at heart the tasks required financial stewardship or management of imperial funds (*fiscus*) for one or more accounts (*ratio*).[118] The work could include signing off on expenses and allowing disbursements of money ("the cashier par excellence"); receiving funds owed to the *fiscus*, such as the provincial tax (*tributum*); or entering into contracts using a *fiscus*.[119] Some *dispensatores* appear to have been important and profitable persons in the imperial economy.[120] Such is the case for an imperial *dispensator* from first-century Ephesos named Eutychus. His exact financial responsibilities are unknown, but based on the fine workmanship of his cinerary urn he had become quite wealthy (See Figure 7).[121]

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for the grain. His precise duties are unclear. But he certainly had some kind of pecuniary responsibilities with grain production or transport. He was surely not the only dispensator in the area. [CATALOGUE #]=*CIL* 3.333. See also *CIL* 10.1750. Likewise from Rome a Secundus Crescentianus is recorded as an imperial slave (*Caesaris servus*) and a *dipensator* for the inheritance tax. He thus oversaw and received funds from Roman citizens living in a particular area of the empire (not necessarily Rome). D(is) M(anibus) / T(ito) Flavio / Apollonio / a libellis f(isci) f(rumentarii) / Secundus / Caesaris / nostri ser(vus) / Crescentianus / disp(ensator) XX / hereditat(ium) (*CIL* 6.8475).

[118] Eutycho Caesaris dispensator (*IvE* 6.2255a); Weaver 1972: 202. The work frequently required travel to and from Rome; Weaver 1972: 204-5.

[119] Boulvert 1970: 429-33. See e.g. *CIL* 3.4049; *CIL* 6.8578. Gaius, *Inst*. 1.122: "the slaves who were permitted to disburse money were called *dispensatores*." In Petronius, (*Sat*. 30.9) the *dispensator* of Trimalchio was Cinnamus and when guests entered the house he was "in the atrium counting gold pieces."

[120] Weaver 1972: 202.

[121] Thomas and İçten 2007: 340.

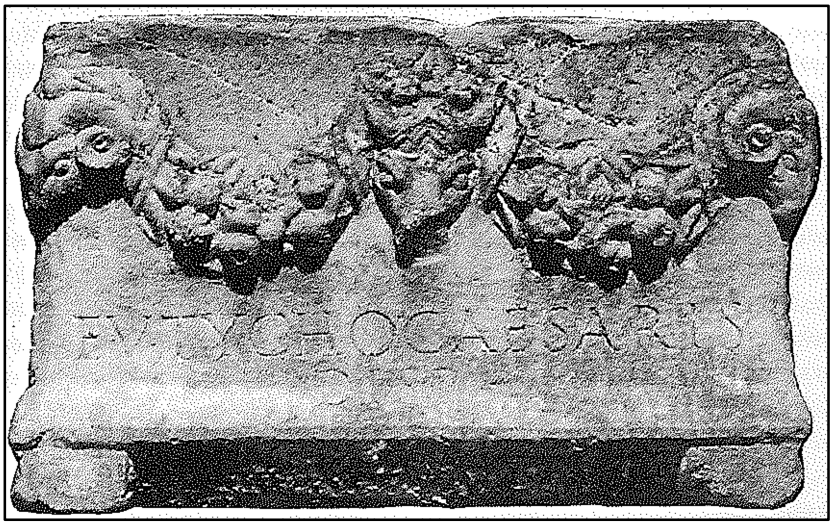

Figure 7. *Ostotheke* of Eutychus, imperial slave *dispensator*, first-century Ephesos.

Dispensatores did not work alone, however. They normally had under-slaves (*vicarii*) as their future replacements.[122] This may have been the counterpart for Quartus' position. Notably, the majority of inscriptions that *vicarii* produced come not from Rome, where the predominance of imperial slave and freed inscriptions survive, but from the provincial centers of administration and "customs posts," like Ephesos.[123] So again from first-century Ephesos, we see this. A certain Ikarus was the *vicarius* of an imperial *dispensator* named Zmaragdus, who may have hailed from Egypt.[124] Once enslaved, both Ikarus and his *ordinarius* Zmaragdus worked in finances as cashiers or collectors, and spent at least part of the time in the provincial capital, though they likely

[122] Weaver 1972: 200-206, and 207-211.
[123] Weaver 1972: 205, and n.1.
[124] *IvE* 6.2270. Solin 1996: II.533; *LSJ* p.1619; Ptolemy, *Geogr*. 4.5.8.

travelled as well. Based on the size of his cinerary urn (29 x 58 cm) Ikarus seems to have done fairly well for himself.

Another parallel for Erastus among imperial slaves is a *vilicus*.[125] The term most often describes a slave who managed other working personnel, specifically slaves, but it had broader applications as well. The imperial slave equivalents to Quartus, then, could be numerous. For example, imperial *vilici* could manage other slaves at imperial villas or estates (*patrimonia*), customs stations (*stationes portorium*), or imperial mines and workshops where s/he also could collect for the *fisus*.[126] Or, as in Nemausus, Gallia Narbonensis (modern Nîmes), an imperial slave could be *a* (not necessarily *the*) manager (*Caesaris vilicus*) of the inheritance tax in that city.[127] In another important case from the province of Aquitania (modern Villefranche-de-Rouergue), slave groups working in the mint (*in metallis*), who identify themselves as *familiae Caesaris* (*familiae Tiberi Caesaris*), honor a *vilicus* named Zmaragdus, who was probably their manager.[128]

To sum up our sketch: in a local setting of Asia Minor, for example Ephesos or its environs, a family of the emperor's slaves–a *familia Caesaris*–formed from intersecting networks. The total number of individuals is not known. Some in the group had mid to lower level functions in the imperial bureaucracy, probably working in finances as

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[125] In second-century Athens, for example, a public slave named Philetus is described as an overseer (*vilicus*/ οἰκονόμος), or financial official, administering the collection of the manumission tax for Roman citizens in the area (*CIL* 3.333=*ILS* 1539=*CIG* 3738=*IGR* 3.25=*IK* 29.46).
[126] Boulvert 1970: 433-34. See also the relationship between an imperial freedman, procurator of the imperial *cultores Larum et imaginum*, an imperial *vilicus*, and the collegium at Ostia (*CIL* 14.4570).
[127] […]/ Caesaris / vil{l}icus XX her(editatium) / sanctissimo / deo Silvano / aram d(onum) d(edit) (*AE* 1954, 194).
[128] *CIL* 13.1550.

clerical or sub-clerical workers. The type of work an Erastus would have performed, along with the groups and slave networks that such work involved, also sheds light on the *familia Caesaris* of Phil 4:22. If Erastus, Tertius, and Quartus are barometers then this Caesar's household may have included imperial *dispensatores*,[129] or more like Quartus,– who may have been an under-slave (*vicarius*) of Erastus–a step or two below: clerks, couriers, assistants, bookkeepers, etc. Such persons still possessed working skills and were somewhat connected in the bureaucracy. Others in Caesar's household did not work in the bureaucracy, but shared a kinship network with those who did. Wives and children–both sons and daughters–as well as slaves could also be members of that *familia Caesaris*. Who the "saints" were in that *faimilia Caesaris*, and how many they were, is not known, though what I have described is most likely the broader social grouping from which they came. The profile will also help to us ascertain how they may have intersected with Paul and the Philippians.

NETWORKS AND SOCIAL RELATIONS: PAUL, THE PHILIPPIANS, AND THE SAINTS

Now that we have considered Paul's location when writing to the Philippians, the sort of imperial personnel that were operative there, and a socio-economic profile for the *familia*

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[129] Probably the most famous *dispensator* was Musicus Scurranus. He belonged to Tiberius and worked in the province of Gallia Lugdunensis. He died while in Rome, probably on business, and was commemorated by an absurd retinue of his sixteen under-slaves: a business agent, an accountant, a doctor, a valet, secretaries, money-carriers, chamberlains, footmen, cooks, and a female slave–probably his mistress (*CIL* 6.5197=*ILS* 1514). In discussion of Phil 4:22 or early Christianity Scurranus is often cited as a representative example of imperial slave riches, upward mobility (Cohick 2009: 266; Martin 1990: 7-8), and hence comparable to the *familia Caesaris* slaves Paul mentions (Rosell Nebreda 2011: 194). All of these opinions are probably too caught up in the fantastical nature of Scurranus' case. See Weaver 1972: 201.

Caesaris Paul mentions, we can examine the relationships between Paul, Caesar's hsouehold, and the Philippians. As we saw earlier, "*praetorium*" in Phil 1:13 has been vital for unscrambling Paul's social context, but casts a permanent shadow over the rest of the letter. Inescapably, it is the verse that readers, even partition theorists, meet first. When readers later arrive at Phil 4:22, therefore, they interpret the "saints" from Caesar's household by filtering it exclusively through an understanding of "*praetorium*" in Phil 1:13. Yet, this internal hermeneutic tends to overlook the valence that "*praetorium*" and "Caesar's household" individually carry. The point about a *praetorium* reveals a new development in Paul's situation, and it is rhetorically crucial for his relationship with the Philippians. So Paul plays it up. He spatializes, in a hyperbolic and general form, the impact of his gospel in the same way he tells those in Rome that their faith is proclaimed throughout "the whole world" (ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ; Rom 1:8).[130] But the latter, as a closing epistolary greeting ("forwarded greetings of the 'third person type'") is not a new development in the same way. It is far more conventional, virtually a cliché, though still socially important.[131] Paul's role is much more passive; the emphasis is on the Philippians and their greeters.

Given the nature of epistolography, the "saints" from Caesar's household sent greetings to the Philippians because the two already knew of each other.[132] Letters

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[130] The phrase ἐν ὅλῳ is a spatial descriptor in line with what Terrence Donaldson has called the "territorial dimension" of Paul's apostolic calling (Donaldson 2006: 109). Compare also "in all of Macedonia" (ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ; 1 Thess 4:10), and all the saints who are "in all Achaea" (ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ; 2 Cor 1:1).
[131] See Klauk 2006: 24-25.
[132] Others have hinted at this: Ascough 2003: 127; Thurston 2005: 161; Reumann 2008: 739.

bridged geographic gaps in social relationships,[133] and note that Paul does not have to name the "saints." Whether the greetings were to "all the saints" in Philippi collectively (Phil 1:1), or to particular Philippians is not entirely clear, although the latter seems more likely. Whatever the case may be, Paul was not introducing the two.[134] Besides the friendship motifs and sharing language (συγκοινωνεῖν, κοινωνεῖν) in this portion of the letter, which presume familiarity and/or fellowship (Phil 4:14-14),[135] the term μάλιστα (Phil 4:22b) may intimate an "especially" close connection (Figure 8). The only other time Paul stresses "especially" in reference to a person is with Onesimus, who had become so close and useful to Paul that he called him his child (literally, "birthed" ὃν ἐγέννησα; Phlm 10), his heart (literally "entrails" σπλάγχνα; Phlm 12), and then "a beloved brother, especially to me" (μάλιστα ἐμοί; Phlm 16). Thus, certain persons from Caesar's household and certain Philippians appear to have had "strong ties" through close, repeated or regular contact, through shared aspects of their life, or shared reciprocal services as colleagues, family, or friends.[136]

Figure 8: Phil 4:22b in the oldest, extant collection of Paul's letters (P^{46}), showing "especially (μάλιστα) those from Caesar's household."

[133] Stowers 1986: 27.
[134] For an introduction see Phoebe in Rom 16:1-2; compare *P.Oxy*. 2.292 (25-6 CE).
[135] See e.g. Reumann 1996: 83-106; Malherbe 1996: 125-40; Fitzgerald 1996: 141-62.
[136] Collar 2013: 10-11.

At minimum, by the time Paul wrote the letter we know certain persons in a *familia Caesaris* in Ephesos or Asia Minor were probably already connected to his Philippian congregation(s) because of shared social networks.[137] The types of networks with which Paul interacted provide important indicators. There are four I want to consider: ethno-geographic networks, family networks, occupational networks, and cultic networks. Such networks were not hermetically sealed, but usually overlapped and interpenetrated.[138] These networks can be distinguished in Paul's communities, as well, but as we have seen, they can also be detected in a *familia Caesaris*. Moreover, imperial slaves and freedmen were also members of associations. This provides further clues for the networks that allowed the interconnections. Before considering each network and the possible connections, though, I offer the following case study, which affords comparable examples of imperial personnel in social networks.

A Case study: Imperial Personnel in a Roman Diaspora

Imperial personnel were connected to other associations through social networks in the so-called Roman diaspora. The Roman diaspora's roots stretch to the Late Republic when

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[137] In network theory, a network is a set of relationships and contains a set of objects and a mapping or description of relations between the objects or nodes (Kadushin 2012: 14). Social network is also a structure of social action (Scott 2000: 4). In a social or ethnographic context, social network may be defined as the web of family, friends, neighbors, and so on, who can provide material, financial, informational, and emotional assistance (Menjívar 2000: 2). For social networks in ancient contexts see White 1992.

[138] Harland 2003: 25. See also Prell 2012: 7-8 and Wasserman and Faust 1994: 36-37.

deracinated groups of Italians were scattered in the eastern Mediterranean.[139] They were immigrants–"men and women, slaves and free, very rich and grindingly poor"– who dotted the Aegean's archipelagos and Asia's cities. They made a concerted effort to fit in with their new environment, acting conjointly with social and civic bodies of Greek cities and participating in social life.[140] The groups also united in local clubs and organizations, which they probably co-opted from a network of people they knew, coming mostly or exclusively from a particular area or city, probably even from particular families.[141]

In Asia Minor important outposts for the Roman diaspora were the various "Roman" associations that began to form in Ephesos in the middle of the first century BCE. These critical nodes for provincial life were known by various names. One was the "Association of Roman Citizens who do business in Ephesos" (*Conventus Civium Romanorum quei Ephesi negotiantur*), another the "Italian merchants who do business in Ephesos" (οἱ ἐν Ἐφέσῳ πραγματευόμενοι ἔμποροι Ἰταλικοὶ).[142] In the time of Claudius, and showing a provincial purview, a group calls itself "The Association of Roman Citizens who do business in Asia" (*conventus civium Romanorum qui in Asia negotiantur*).[143] Throughout the Julio-Claudian period, economic life in the provincial

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[139] Purcell 2005: 85. Purcell suggests the Roman diaspora was neither simply colonial or truly ethnic. Others have classified the phenomenon as a trade diaspora (Terpstra 2013: 176).
[140] Terpstra 2013: 213, 220.
[141] Terpstra 2013: 213.
[142] *IvE* 3.658, (36 BCE); *IvE* 3.800 (1st cent. BCE, early Augustan). Other names for perhaps related groups appear as "the Italian businessmen who are in Ephesos" (*Italicei…quei Ephesi* [*negotiantur*]; *IvE* 4.2058=*CIL* 3.14195 (60s BCE); also the fragmentary *IvE* 3.884. See Scherrer 2007: 63, and 70-2. On the history of Ephesos from Augustus through the Julio-Claudian period, including the "association of Roman citizens," see Knibbe and Alzinger 1980: 757-69, 815-21.
[143] *IvE* 7,1.3019.

capital was controlled by the association of Roman citizens (*conventus*), including building and rebuilding activities, especially in the Upper (State) Agora.[144] The group also commemorated statues to Claudius in 43 CE, for example.[145] Other Roman associations similar to those at Ephesos– called "the Roman residents," "Roman businessmen," or simply "the Romans"–appear farther inland at Tralles, Laodicea, and Apamea (Asia's second *emporion*),[146] as well as at other coastal sites like Assos and Kaunos.[147] As the names indicate, moreover, many of these Roman associations and their individual members ("immigrant traders") had geographic and occupational connections beyond their local environment.[148] This was true of the associations in Ephesos as well.[149]

Significantly, many of the chief members of the Association of Roman Citizens in Ephesos, especially early on, were imperial freedmen, and several were benefactors of the city.[150] For instance, a Greek inscription from the second half of the first century BCE

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[144] Scherrer 2001: 69. Ephesos was concerned with the reconstructions following the earthquakes of 17 and 23 CE at least until the end of the Julio-Claudian period (Raja 2012: 58). See *IvE* 7.1, 3006, 3003; *IvE* 2.410.

[145] Scherrer 2007: 75.

[146] Pleket 1994: 119

[147] Terpstra 2013: 207; also Mitchell 1976: 117; Laodicea, *IK* 49.48; Assos, *IK* 4.13 and 19; Kaunos, *IvK* 89. Purcell describes these Roman associations thusly: Formal or informal, these arrangements were often very-long-lived. We can often see social continuity over generations, and indeed an upward social mobility on the part of the Roman residents, which was undoubtedly linked with the increasingly close symbioses between Romans and locals through cultural assimilation, civic rights, and intermarriage (Purcell 2005: 95).

[148] Terpstra 2013: 177.

[149] Some have suggested that the "Association of Roman Citizens" in Ephesos (*conventus*) was probably the representative Roman *conventus* for the whole province; so Scherrer 2007: 66; Scherrer 2001: 69; Herz 2003: 134. According to these scholars, a primary reason is that the *conventus* probably petitioned Augustus to establish an imperial cult in Ephesos (Dio Cassius 51.20.7). This meant the establishment of a centralized cult place for all *cives Romani* of the respective Province (Asia and Bythinia). By extension, the *conventus* was also responsible for much of the building activity in the city's Upper (State) Agora.

[150] Raja 2012: 67, 75; Scherrer 2007: 69; Scherrer 2001: 69.

honors a certain Gaius Julius, an "imperial freedman, and "foremost of the Romans" (πρῶτον τῶν Ῥωμαίων) because he donated money to a "synod" for completing the sacrifice to Roma and to the goddess (i.e. Artemis) for the Ephesians each year.[151] The phrase "foremost of the Romans" suggests that Gaius Julius was probably a member of and benefactor for the *conventus civium Romanorum*.[152]

An imperial freedman from the same period named Gaius Julius Nicephorus–perhaps the same person as above–and who must have played a leading role in the *conventus* was, remarkably, even honored as *prytanis* for life (πρυτανείαν διὰ βίου).[153] This office entailed wealth–as the holder was expected to help subsidize traditional cultic responsibilities (e.g. Hestia's fire, Artemis' mysteries, and various sacrifices)–and civic prestige–as the position also entailed receiving official municipal guests.[154] In addition to the networks that connected them to the *conventus*, both imperial freedmen participated in complex cultic networks connected to Artemis along with imperial deities. They shared these networks with other members of the association, but also with other persons devoted to Artemis in Ephesos, and more broadly, in Asia Minor and the Roman world.[155] These imperial freedmen also seem to have generated a substantial family

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[151] *IvE* 6.859a, but see Engelmann 1990: 92-4.
[152] Engelmann 1990: 92-4.
[153] *IvE* 6.859. See Scherrer 2007: 68-9. Greek inscription from the Tetragonos Agora.
[154] Rogers 2012: 189-90; Friesen 2001: 97-8.
[155] Artemis of Ephesos was one of the most popular and influential deities in the Greco-Roman World. See Rogers 2012: 6-12. For an array of cultic associations in Asia Minor see Harland 2003: 44-49.

network of *Gaii Iulii* in Ephesos and elsewhere.[156]

Meanwhile, beyond a civic context, imperial personnel were connected to various Roman associations in other, more intimate ways, especially through family networks. Examples survive in which imperial slaves and freedmen married women who were related to members of such Roman associations. [157] A particularly rich and early example comes from the eastern side Asia Minor at Synnada, Phrygia. There a certain Hyacinthus, who identifies himself as a *tabularius*/ ταβλάριος of the emperor Nero, honors his partner (*contubernalis*) Arruntia Attice and his son Arruntius Iustus on an inscription.[158] Hyacinthus, undoubtedly a slave, worked at some type of bookkeeping, most likely for the imperially-owned marble quarries at nearby Dokimeion. Hyacinthus' semi-legal wife,

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[156] Another imperial freedman with the name Gaius Iulius, whose cognomen is lost, is also attested in this period on a family tomb for wife and son (*IvE* 6.2272b). The *nomen* Julius is extremely widespread in Ephesos. Up to the third century, the name is used for more than a hundred citizens, a third of whom take the *praenomen* Gaius (Meier 2009: 402-4). The *Gaii Iulii* imperial freedmen are in fact the earliest bearers of this ubiquitous *Gaii Iulii* name in Ephesos. See the dedicatory inscription from the Asklepieion of Pergamum by a Gaius Iulius Marcellus who, in a rare specification of a profession, identifies himself as a banker from Ephesos (Meier 2009: 402-4). Then compare *IvE* 6.2273b from Ephesos. The people are clearly related and both couples are probably *coliberti* of the *Gaii Iulii* (Meier 2009: 403). We now have evidence for other Roman families in the *conventus* at Ephesos, including their freedpersons–many of them women–from a 2006 rescue excavation of the burial chamber of the Polio family. See Büyükkolancı, Engelmann, and Thomas 2010.

[157] Titus Flavius Epagathus was an imperial freedman in Ephesos in 104-5 CE, and with his wife Manlia Procula, donated a statue group to Artemis Ephesia and Trajan. Procula, however, was the daughter of a Lucius (Manlius) and was thus probably related to Lucius Manlius Maritus who belonged to the *conventus* of Roman citizens in Ephesos when it honored the emperor Claudius in the 40s CE (*IvE* 7,1.3019). Likewise, an inscription from Appia in the Upper Tembris Valley, dating to 79 CE, records that Titus Flavius Helius, an imperial freedman and peace-keeper or guard (εἰρηνοφύλαξ) probably on an imperial estate, was married to Sextilia Hedone (*GRIA* 144). The couple jointly dedicated dual steles to Zeus Bennios of Helius' homeland and to his ancestral gods. Helius was an Appian native–actually a freeborn man–and Hedone was a freeborn woman who was probably the daughter of a local freedman agent of an Italian businessman (Kearsley 2001: 119). She was a member (position unknown) of the Sextilii family, which was prominent in mid-first century CE Ephesos, and also appears in Smyrna and Akmonia. For Sextilii in early to mid-1st cent Ephesos see *AE* 1966, 448=*AE* 1958, 82; *IvE* 2.404; also *AE* 1950, 100. The family seems to have been present in Asia Minor beginning in the Late Republic (Cicero, *Fl.* 34-5).

[158] *CIL* 3.7047= *IGR* 4.710=*MAMA* 4.53=*GRIA* 61.

Arruntia Attice, was the daughter of a Lucius Arruntius, and was therefore a freeborn woman of the *L. Arruntii*. The L. Arruntii family network appears in western Asia Minor at Sardis, Temenouthyrai, and Eumeneia,[159] as well as in the Synnada area where by the late first-century BCE some L. Arruntii had settled. There in Phrygia the family forged connections to associations such as "Roman settlers" and "Romans doing business."[160] Hyacinthus was thus connected to these associations because of his wife's family network.

He may also have been connected to them because of his work, however. The quarries at Dokimeion were big business, the marble famous and in high-demand. In addition to all the other work required on site–there were workshops nearby as well–the stone was transported westward to other parts of the province, to Rome (e.g. in the Baths of Claudius Etruscus, whose father was an imperial freedman), and across the empire as far as Londinium (modern London).[161] It is not surprising that there is evidence at the Dokimeion quarries for private contractors (*caesura*-holders), who were not associated with imperial personnel like Hyacinthus.[162] The holders were most likely members of

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[159] All the Arruntii may have been wealthy freed-slaves or descendants of them; Kearsley 2001: 110. For an overview see Christol and Drew-Bear 1986: 55-62.

[160] Kearsley 2001: 110. Lucius Arruntius Aciamus, for example, supplied the city with water during the Augustan period (*MAMA* 4.70), and Lucius Arruntius Thyrsus was honored as *agoranomos* by the people of Synnada and by the resident Romans (*MAMA* 6.372). See Christol and Drew-Bear 1986: 58-60, n. 77 and 82.

[161] See Niewöhner 2013: 215-19; Walker and Matthews 1988: 122; Pritchard 1986: 172; Hirt 2010: 297-8. For the Baths of Claudius Etruscus see Statius, *Silvae* 1.5; also Weaver 1972: 282-94

[162] Compare the example of Epaphroditus, an imperial slave and quarry contractor in Mons Claudianus, Egypt in 118-119CE (*SEG* 43, 1159, 1123).

local communities in Phrygia.[163] If Hyacinthus was involved with the quarries, which seems inevitable, some of the Roman associations could have also known and/or worked with him through related activities (extraction, cutting, and/or transport), perhaps with an L. Arruntii contingent.

Furthermore, the networks in which Hyacinthus operated were extremely dense. Hyancinthus, a slave of Nero who worked in imperial administration married into the L. Arrunntii a prominent, immigrant, Italian family. They not only had an extensive ethno-geographic and family network, plus occupational connections to various Roman associations. At the same time, the family also had direct ties to the provincial, financial, administration of Asia. A contemporaneous inscription to Hyacinthus's records that the people of nearby Prymnessos (modern Sülün, 22.5km/ 14mi south of ancient Synnada), along with the "Roman residents" and the "Romans doing business there," honored Lucius Arruntius Scribonianus with a statue.[164] Scribonianus was of senatorial rank, prefect of Rome, an augur, and a descendant of Pompey the Great. He also happened to be *quaestor* of the province of Asia in 50CE, not long before Hyacinthus set up his incription.[165] Scribonianus had been a financial administrator of the *res publica* who certainly spent time in Ephesos while holding office. What is more, other segments of the network can be traced. Through Scribonianus the L. Arruntii family was connected to

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[163] Hirt 2010: 295, 297. Russell 2013: 47.
[164] *GRIA* 135=*IGRR* 4.675=*SEG* 36, 1200. The bilingual inscription was part of the statue base. The key phrase in Latin is "R(omani) [qui ibi nego]/tiantur cura[m agente]," while in Greek the text reads Ὁ δῆμος καὶ ο[ἱ κατακοικοῦν]τες Ῥωμαῖοι.
[165] Christol and Drew-Bear 1986: 59, and n.77.

Nero himself, the owner of Hyacinthus. In 32 CE Scribonianus' homonymous father had been co-consul with Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, the biological father of Nero. Hence, the union between Hyacinthus and Attice, which brought the two families together again, was just the edge of complex networks, spanning time and space, and intersecting with other diasporic networks.

The examples I have cited thus far show how different, though related, networks connected imperial personnel to Roman associations in the diaspora. The examples also show that the networks could be quite intricate. This point should be a reminder that any network connection between Caesar's household and the Philippians could be, and likely was, more complicated. The four network types I consider below are hence helpful for organizing the possibilities in light of anologues in the Roman diaspora. Let us now take each network in turn.

Ethno-Geographic Networks

These are the broadest types of networks we will consider. Persons who claim similar ethnic or geographic ties–immigrants, emigrants, and resident foreigners–may participate in a common ethno-geographic network.[166] Paul, for example, shared an ethno-geographic network with others in the Jewish diaspora. Writing from Corinth he can single out his "kin" (συγγενής) in Rome (Rom 16: 7, 11, 21; 1 Cor 9:20). At the same

[166] Harland 2003: 33

time, the vast majority (78%) of Paul's known travelling leaders tended to be Jewish.[167] And as the collection (λογεία) for the saints shows, Paul also maintained connections to persons in Jerusalem and Judea (Rom 15:25, 31; 1 Cor 16:3).

The saints from Caesar's household may have shared a comparable ethno-geographic network with persons in Philippi. The Philippian church, as one of Paul's "churches of gentiles" (ἔθνοι; Rom 16:4), probably had representation from a number of the region's ethnic groups,[168] and some scholars have reasonably proposed that the saints were originally from Macedonia, Thrace, or even Philippi.[169] In this case, the imperial slaves had been, for causes unknown, severed from their compatriots or ethnic group in the Philippian community.[170] This is a plausible, though not demonstable, scenario for a few reasons.

One is that imperial slaves, especially early in the *principate* tended to hail from different places in the Mediterranean (recall Zmaragdus from Ephesos) because they were taken as booty by, or bequeathed to, the Julio-Claudian emperors, if not purchased

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[167] Friesen 2005: 358.

[168] For example, expatriated "Italian" peasants, "Greeks" comprised of indigenous tribes, etc. On the composition of the Philippian church, see Oakes who suggests the majority of the population of the town was probably not Romans and not citizens (2001: 51, 54, 59-63) and 73-4 for the various indigenous under the heading "Greek." According to Koukouli-Chrysantaki the population of Philippi in the Julio-Claudian period was a mixture of Greeks, Romans, native Thracians, and foreigners (Koukouli-Chrysantaki 1998: 22). See also White 1995a: 242 and Collart 1937: 1.290-305.

[169] Beare 1973: 158; Houlden 1977 [1970]: 116. Müller reasons that since Philippi was a city of military veterans, which could have had contact with many relatives of the imperial house, which had become Christians, the special greeting is understandable (1993: 210).

[170] Schenk 1984: 134, 142.

outright on the market.[171] They were thus born outside the slave system–enforced migrants deracinated from an ancestral culture (*ethnos*)[172]–and were akin to "saltwater slaves" in New World slavery systems. Some may have been born in Macedonia, for instance, been enslaved, and entering the emperor's vast holdings, wound up in the emperor's service in Ephesos or Asia.[173] A second reason is that there was an imperial estate (*patrimonium*) in Macedonia in this period, and a number of the emperor's slaves would have lived and worked there.[174] Perhaps they knew people in Philippi who were part the community, but were on the move, had moved, or been removed from the area to Ephesos or Asia Minor. Both options are speculative, of course.

But if saints in a *familia Caesaris* were, say, indigenous Greeks from Macedonia who had been enslaved and uprooted, their ability to participate in the network would depend on other mechanisms. One way to continue their interregional contacts was through epistolary correspondence (Phil 4:22). This was a standard way, in fact, as the example of the Tyrian merchants in Delos and Puteoli demonstrates.[175] Communication by letter, in turn, relied on other contacts (e.g. business, friends, family) either in the network or in a related network to ensure the delivery. Another way to connect to their homeland was through benefaction, or even remittances, which also relied on other

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[171] Later, the majority of imperial slaves were born on the inside, as house-born slaves (*vernae*) according to Weaver 2004: 197-98. See also Herrmann-Otto 2009: 179.
[172] Webster 2010: 45; Patterson 1982: 5.
[173] There is debate about how often emperors purchased slaves from the market. See discussion in chapter 1.
[174] See Nigdelis 1994.
[175] Tyrian merchants at Puteoli (*OGIS* 595=*IGR* I.421). The group wrote to their homeland for financial assistance and the Tyrians in Syria responded by asking another group of Tyrian merchants in Rome to help those in Puteoli. See Harland 2003: 36. Also White 1996: 31-7, Nock 1933: 50-3, 66-8.

mechanisms. Though the evidence for this kind of activity is more readily detectable among imperial freedmen, who could legally own property, imperial slaves could be civic benefactors as well.[176] Moreover, in the same vein, indigenous populations or ethnic enclaves could look to those within the imperial slave system as "intermediaries" in their ethno-geographic network.[177]

Ultimately we cannot know from where the saints in Caesar's household originated. Even with material or onomastic data it is very difficult to identify the ethnic origins of slaves.[178] But members of a *familia Caesaris* could still participate in an ethno-geographic network with the Philippians without being from Macedonia, Thrace, or Philippi. In the example of the imperial slave Hyacinthus above, he was linked to nodes in an ethno-geographic network ("Roman" was loosely defined) because of his relationship with Attice. Or, to take another example, two imperial freedmen donated or made offerings to the goddess Kore in Rome. But in so doing, they could also participate in an ethno-geographic network with a group from Sardis (Σαρδιανοί) living in Rome, even if the freedmen were not from Sardis.[179] Analogously, in a very material sense

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[176] See Boulvert 1974: 216-30 and chart on 218-20.

[177] Thus a prominent example is Publius Aelius Alcibiades. He was originally from Nysa in Caria. He presumably was an imperial slave before he became a *cubicularius*–a valet we might say–of Hadrian. Alcibiades was later honored by his hometown as a benefactor and caretaker, suggesting he remained connected to them in some way. The civic institutions of Nysa that honored him also mentioned his benefactions to an association of Nysians living in Rome. They, too, must have maintained some contacts with their homeland (*ILS* 8857; *IvE* 1.22). See Millar 1977: 80-81 and Harland 2003: 36. See also the case of Gaius Iulius Zoilus of Aphrodisias, imperial freedman of Augustus, and civic benefactor for his native city. Weaver 2004: 199.

[178] See Webster 2010.

[179] θεὰν Κόρην Σαρδιανοῖς Λ(ούκιος) Αὐρ(ήλιος) Σάτυρος ἀπελ(εύθερος) Σεβασ(τοῦ) ἀνέθηκεν (*IGUR* 1.86) and θεὰν Κόρην Σαρδιανοῖς Μάρκος Αὐρήλιος Σύμφορος Σεβαστοῦ [ἀπελεύθερος] (*IGUR* 1.87). The inscriptions are from Rome, 2nd-3rd cent. CE.

(σαρκικός; Rom 15:27), Paul's followers from Philippi and Corinth, from Macedonia, Achaia (Rom 15:26), and Galatia, (1 Cor 16:1, 3) were integrated into an ethno-geographic network through their contributions and gifts. The network linked them with others in Judea and Jerusalem. Certain members of Caesar's household, given the right circumstances, could also participate in the network with other kinds of contributions.

"Ethnicity" was not fixed.[180] It was a subjective, dynamic construct that geography, much less blood or "stock," did not determine.[181] Some theorists have emphasized, using Pierre Bourdieu's notion of intersubjectivity and *habitus*, that ethnic identity was rooted in ongoing daily practice that shapes and is shaped by the form and effects of ethnic expression.[182] Thus, persons in Caesar's household could connect with the Philippians through an ethno-geographic network related to a real or assumed shared culture. The shared activities of the network could involve ascriptions of commonly held myths, historical figures, and religious practices, more than a common ethnic "background." Cultic ties could be critical in this sense.

Family-Household Networks

Ethno-geographic networks dovetail nicely with family and household networks. This

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[180] *Ethnos*, after all, originally signified only "group" or "grouping," not the particular identity (Denzey 2002: 494).

[181] Ethnic identity was often related to issues of power, religion, law, class and gender, and varied according to the context. Moreover, individuals could identify with different ethnic groups of varying amplitude (province, region, city, town, etc.) so that ethnic identifications were, in reality, tiered rather than mutually exclusive (Derks and Roymans 2009: 1, 6).

[182] See Jones 1997: 13-14, 87-100. According to these scholars, then, ethnic "groups"– are culturally ascribed identity groups (Jones 1997: 84). Similarly, Morgan 2009: 12.

type of network refers to those who share spatial or genealogical proximity in social practice.[183] Paul interacted with a number of such networks. For instance, members of Chloe's family (ὑπὸ τῶν Χλόης)–probably her slaves or freedpersons–seem to have been in Ephesos (or Asia) while Paul was and informed him about strife back in Corinth (1 Cor 1:11). Similarly, in Corinth Paul had close ties with the Stephanus household (τὸν Στεφανᾶ οἶκον; 1 Cor 1:16), then later Stephanus and other members of his family network–Fortunatus and Achaicus, probably his slaves or freedmen–came to Ephesos to assist Paul (1 Cor 16:17). Philemon and Onesimus' family–Apphia and Archippus–also had close ties with Paul. Likewise, while in Corinth or elsewhere in the Aegean Paul must have had contact with family networks of Aristobulus and Narcissus (Rom 16: 10-11). Additionally, household connections or familial relationships commonly account for the membership, existence, and identity of a number of associations,[184] so the "house-churches" Paul periodically mentions (οἶκος ἐκκλησία; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Phlm 2) shows his other connections to family and household networks.

Considering Chloe and Stephanus' family network, it may have been unremarkable if Paul encountered persons in a *familia Caesaris* who shared a family network with some at Philippi. Family ties had multiple geographies,[185] as well as varying socialities. The persons Paul references could have had family connections with the Philippians based on consanguinity (brothers, sisters, mothers) or on non-biological

[183] Harders 2012: 15.
[184] Harland 2003: 30.
[185] Families in migrant communities were not necessarily geographically unified nuclear units of cohabitating spouses and children (McKeown 2001: 70).

kinship (e.g. spouses, friends and what has been called "*framily*").[186] Why the network was strung out over the northeastern Aegean is open to question. Slavery divided families, certainly. And we have already seen how Hyacinthus was connected to another family network and its associations through a marital union. But another, related explanation for the dispersed family ties among Caesar's household and the Philippians may have been migration.[187] That is, some within a family at Philippi migrated to Asia Minor, either as a result of or even for the sake of the imperial slave system.

On the one hand, imperial slaves were part and parcel of the empire's migratory patterns and populations that included military, civilian (a large and diverse group of people) and imperial administration, to use broad categories.[188] Thus, members of Caesar's household could have formed family ties while in Philippi, but left for Asia on official orders and, as it were, as involuntary labor migrants. On the other hand, migration among ostensibly free civilians, i.e. non-imperial personnel, could also lead to anomalous status or even a reduction in status from freeborn to imperial slave.[189] In this case, certain people, compelled by economic concerns of the family, left Philippi, and later entered the emperor's service in Asia or Ephesos. In the end, reduction to imperial slavery, whether

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[186] I will not reiterate the discussion of the ancient family here. Suffice it to say that family was not necessarily genealogical, just as kinship was not consanguine, and household, though a spatial category, did not define household groups. See discussion in Chapter 1 and Harders 2012.

[187] "Migrant" encompasses diverse types of transient people: permanent emigrants and settlers, temporary contract workers, professional, business or trader migrants, students, refugees and asylum seekers, and cross border commuters. People often shift between these categories (Van Hear 1998: 40-1). Over the last decade or so studies have indicated a far greater degree of migration in the Roman Empire than previously assumed by both archaeologists and ancient historians (Laurence 2012: 125-26).

[188] Eckardt et al 2010: 102.

[189] Noy 2000: 25.

intended or not, may have had some positive affects on the family network especially *if* imperial slavery led to other opportunities, not least of which was Roman citizenship or official posts in the administration.

The following examples from other families may be illustrative. On a second century inscription from Rome an imperial freedman named Lucius Pompeius Itharus set up an epitaph for himself, his fellow-freedwoman (*conliberta*) Pompeia Gemella, his sister Ulpia Gemina, and his freedmen and freedwomen. Then on the right side of the epitaph a Greek inscription commemorates Itharus' mother Julia, also called Nana. She was from Eumeneia in Asia Minor, a citizen of the city (Εὐμένισσα), wife of a certain Alexander, and daughter of a Demades, also a Eumeneian.[190] Note then that Itharus was a freeborn man, and his family had some local status.[191] He was probably from Eumeneia originally, and either left there in the imperial system or on the outside. But when he later appears in Rome he is an imperial freedman, presumably after first being an imperial slave in an unknown location(s). As one might imagine, there is little reason for a freedman to record the enslaved chapter of his life on the stone. The inscription does not record any official post as a freedman either. Moreover, the inscription shows a family

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190 [*Left*] D(is) M(anibus)/ L(ucius) Pompeius Aug(usti) lib(ertus)/ Itharus fecit/ Pompeiae Gemellae conl(ibertae)/ et Ulpiae Geminae sorori/ eius et sibi et lib(ertis) libertabus/ posterisq(ue) eorum/ [*Right*] μνείᾳ σου/ Ἰουλία ἣ καὶ Ναναˑ/ Εὐμένισσα/ Λ(ουκίου) Πομπηίου Ἰθάρου/ μήτηρ Ἀλεξάνδρου/ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου γυ-/νὴ Δημάδους/ Εὐμενέως θυγάτηρ (*IGUR* 2.902). The *nomen* "Pompeius" does not belong to any known emperor.

191 On the other hand, his father Alexander may have been an imperial slave. The S.C. Claudianum ruled that the child of an imperial slave father and a free mother would be an imperial slave. (Though how often this occurred in practice is debatable). Alexander may have been an imperial slave, but that does not explain Pompeius as this name was not Iulia Nana's name and is not that of any emperor (Noy 2000: 25 and n.68).

network, which included an imperial freedwoman, and others, who it seems, left home to join Itharus in Rome. Through the imperial slave system, Itharus could have blazed a migration trail that others in his family network could follow. The trail apparently allowed him to acquire the Roman citizenship that his family did not possess.[192]

Itharus likely did not jump straight from Asia Minor to Rome, though. Migrations happened in several stages–various cities and provinces. They could crisscross the Mediterranean, and move through family networks.[193] So, for example, Marcus Ulpius Chariton was born in Sardinia, then worked at Tarsus, Cilicia, and later died in Rome as an imperial freedman aged 35. When or where he was an imperial slave is not known. He was commemorated in Rome by his sister Ulpia Charitine, and by his kinsman (*cognatus*) Publius Aelius Africanus. He, too, was an imperial freedman. Given his ethno-geographic cognomen he may have served the emperor in one place, while his relative Chariton did the same in another place.[194] The family ties then entwined at a key hub, now with two imperial freedman members. Others families have similar stories.[195]

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[192] Noy 2000: 25.

[193] Studies of contemporary migration show that many migrants do not just make a single move in a lifetime, but in several stages. Migration is not a once in a lifetime decision (Noy 2000: 55). For discussion of this phenomenon at ancient Pergamon see White 1998. As a comparative, in the case of nineteenth century Chinese migrant networks, most migration moved through business, family, and village networks, dividing migration into a multitude of grooves that entwined and intersected at key nodes (McKeown 2001: 65). Similarly, canonical Acts has Aquila move from Pontus, his homeland, to Rome and then to Corinth (Acts 18:2). Paul also mentions that Aquila and Prisca have a house in Asia (1 Cor 16:19), but they also appear in Rome (Rom 16:3).

[194] The second part of the inscription is in Greek (*CIL* 6.29152).

[195] A Marcus Ulpius Dorus, an imperial freedman, commemorates his brother M. Ulpius Viator an *eques singularis* who soldiered for six years and died at age twenty-two. D(is) M(anibus) / M(arco) Ulpio Viatori / equiti sing(ulari) Aug(usti) / milit(avit) ann(os) VI / vix(it) ann(os) XXII / M(arcus) Ulpius Aug(usti) lib(ertus) Dorus / fratri / pientissimo fec(it) (*CIL* 6.3309). The epitaph is from Rome, but the two brothers seem to have followed two different "routes" to attain Roman citizenship: one brother was a freeborn

In some cases becoming imperial personnel might be an impetus for migration. An important example is a second century (fragmentary) letter from Oxyrynchus, Egypt:

> …[Greet]…and his children–may the evil eye not touch them–and Isidora, your sister, and Athenais. Be sure to write to me about Dionysarion, how many months (pregnant) she is. Gaia greets you, as well as both her children and husband. You should know, then, that Herminos went off to Rome and became a freedman of Caesar so that he may take offices. Greet all yours by name, and all those with me greet you. I pray you are well. [*Address on the back*] …of…at…Oxyrynchus.[196]

The letter has major implications for the entire imperial slave system, which I cannot discuss here. For our purposes it is important to observe, first, that this is the end of a "family" letter.[197] The greeting exchanges, which should immediately evoke Phil 4:22, reveal a network of family and friends who are in at least three different locations. The epistolary geography reveals that two "nodes" of the network are probably in various spots of Egypt, while a third is in Rome. Second, Herminos, a member of this family network, had left Egypt for Rome, and it seems that there he became an imperial freedman (Ἑρμῖνος ἀπῆλθεν ἰς Ῥώμ[ην] καὶ ἀπελεύθερος ἐγένετ[ο] Καίσαρος). Apparently he wrote home with this information, which the author of our letter could then

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soldier; the other brother seems also to have been freeborn, but was later manumitted as an imperial freedman after imperial enslavement (Noy 2000: 26).

196 *P.Oxy*. 46.3312.

197 Stowers 1986: 27-31.

disseminate to others in the network. Third, this presumably means that Herminos was an imperial slave sometime beforehand.

Now, Herminos may already have been a slave before departing Egypt.[198] But if this were so, it is difficult to understand how he could have had such freedom to leave (ἀπῆλθεν) for Rome. He was not sent or transferred, it seems. It is more likely, I think, that Herminos migrated to Rome as a freeborn man. He then entered the emperor's service through the "regular slave trade,"[199] but followed a more unofficial procedure (e.g. bribery) of enslavement and manumission, perhaps in one transaction, in order expedite the processes and advance through the system (ἵνα ὀπίκια λάβ[η.]).[200] His own improvement (e.g. Roman citizenship or an official post) would surely affect others in his family network, and this lies behind the informative tone of the letter–"You should know" (γινως οὖ[ν]).[201] Often times, the expectation of the family would be crucial for migration decisions since the long-term preservation of the household was at stake.[202] Leaving Egypt to enter and, hopefully, traverse the imperial slave system, may have been a socio-economic strategy for Herminos and his family.[203] Whether he was successful at attaining a post is another matter. Migrants do not necessarily have all the relevant

198 This is Weaver's assumption. Weaver 2004: 196-97.
199 Weaver 2004: 198. Weaver did not think this was a normal practice.
200 This is Noy's suggestion (2000: 26-7), and see Weaver 2004: 199.
201 Weaver: "wishful thinking to impress his correspondent" (2004: 204).
202 Taylor 2011: 126-7.
203 McKeown 2001: 70. Compare the case of Trophimus, an imperial freedman, a boy once a Phrygian shepherd, who was apparently sent to Rome at an early age (*CIL* 6.27657). Economic concerns often underlay migration. These are commonly known as "push-pull" factors. For example, changes in or strains on resources at home (poverty, poor harvest, falling grain prices, death of key family members, unemployment, etc.) pushed people out of one area, while the perceived economic opportunities elsewhere (e.g. in metropolises) pulled in migrants. See Holleran 2011.

information when they set out.[204] Perhaps Herminos or his family knew someone who was already inside the system. It was not uncommon for imperial personnel to patronize those on the outside.[205] So as distasteful as it might seem to some,[206] we cannot rule out the possibility or viability, in certain situations, of self-sale into imperial slavery for the sake of family concerns.

These examples present different possibilities for understanding spatially fragmented family ties among members of Caesar's household and the Philippians. They may also convey how the imperial slave system could act as a social or economic catchment area for migrants caught up in larger labor flows of the Mediterranean. The urban economy and labor market in Ephesos, for example, a major entrepôt of the region, must have pushed and pulled many people from all over Asia and the Aegean basin. Along with Rome and Delos, Ephesos was also one of the chief centers for the import, export and trade in slaves.[207] Moreover, as studies have shown, interregional migration

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[204] Noy 2000: 89.

[205] For example, Marcus Ulpius Phaedimus freedman of Trajan, who "rose" from keeper of the emperor's drinking cup (*a potione* to *lictor proximus*) to the *lictor*-bearer nearest the emperor (*lictor proximus*) and then to records-keeper of privileges granted by the emperor (*a commentariis beneficorium*). Phaedimus had his own slave who was in charge of his clothes (*a veste*). Phaedimus manumitted him and he subsequently became an imperial freedman named Valens Aug. lib. Phaedimianus (*CIL* 6.1884=*ILS* 1792). Millar 1977: 67-69. See also the case of Epagathus and his friend Ithacus in Corinth (*ICor* 8,2.76) and Sicyon (*AE* 1977, 779). Also Marcus Ulpius Glyptus in Ephesos (*IvE* 6.2037) and Felico, fellow-slave of Epictetus (*Dis*. 1.19).

[206] As does Weaver: "Only genuine slaves of the emperor need apply" (2004: 199).

[207] Bodel 2011: 301 and George 2011: 395. There were several slaving groups doing business in Ephesos (*in statario negotiantur*; *IvE* 3.646). One of the group's patrons in the 40s was the proconsul of Asia Minor, Gaius Sallustius Crispus Passienus (Equitius), the stepfather of the emperor Nero (*IvE* 7,1. 3025). There might also be demographic factors. In demographic terms, pre-industrial cities probably depended on a substantial rate of net immigration to maintain population levels. See White 1995b. Compare the city of Rome in Noy 2000: 17-18 and Scheidel 2004: 15-17. Ephesos was in several ways like nineteenth century Hong Kong. Chinese Hong Kong was a city built largely on an economy of migration. Institutions and

among neighboring provinces, for example from Macedonia to Asia, would have been pronounced since people often moved to a geographically contiguous market in labor or land.[208] But the imperial slave system was not necessarily a source of upward mobility,[209] so much as people thought it could be. Results would have varied. A network tie inside the imperial system must have helped.

Occupation-Labor Networks

An occupational or labor network refers to the connections among people of similar work, related industries and services.[210] These include trade networks, and could overlap or evolve within family networks or ethno-geographic networks. We have already seen examples of such networks among Romans doing business in Ephesos and Asia Minor, and there is a wealth of extant material for other occupational associations in the ancient world.[211] Regrettably, apart from his labor in the gospel, we hear very little from Paul about his other type(s) of work.[212] In canonical Acts Paul is a tentmaker, and because Aquila and Prisca are also, Paul stays and works with them in Corinth (Acts 18:3). This is an example of an occupational network and its binding ties, though how authentic the

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businesses in Hong Kong were links in a worldwide chain of services that supported migration and made it into a viable economic strategy (McKeown 2001: 76).

[208] Noy 2000: 53. By comparison, studies of migration to Roman Spain have shown how important emigration from Africa and Gaul were, along with migration from farther afield (Syria, Macedonia, Thrace, and Asia Minor). A similar data set exists for Roman Gaul. In terms of percentage migration to Gaul, Italy and Germany comprise the largest, followed by Greece and Hispania, then a number of other areas (Syria, Asia, and Africa). See Eckardt et al 2009: 104-5.

[209] Martin 1990: 30.

[210] For occupational networks in the ancient world see Harland 2003: 38-44.

[211] See Harland 2003: 39-40, Figure 5.

[212] 1 Cor 4:12; 1 Thess 2:9; 1 Cor 9: 6; 2 Cor 11:27.

story is for Paul's life is uncertain.[213]

We can be certain, however, that Paul interacted with occupational networks. It has been argued, for example, that the entire Thessalonian community was a professional association of "handworkers" perhaps tentmakers or leather-workers.[214] In his letter, Paul emphasizes his own labor and work (ἐργαζόμενοι) and then encourages the Thessalonians to work with their own hands (ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ἰδίαις] χερσὶν); these expressions may be taken to indicate his participation in the occupational network (1 Thess 2:9, 4:9-12).[215] The Philippians would have had similar occupational networks intersecting within the community.

Certain members of the *familia Caesaris* Paul mentions likely shared an occupational network with individuals in the Philippian community.[216] It has been suggested, for example, that the purple-dealer Lydia of Thyatira (Acts 16:14), was a member of the *familia Caesaris*, and the greetings in Phil 4:22 would then be from Lydia and her associates.[217] The reasoning here is that the name Lydia (an ethnikon) was a slave name, "colour-fast purple" was an imperial monopoly, and workers in this industry were

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[213] On Paul's work see Hock 1980: 20-25, 50-65; Malherbe 1983 [1977]: 89-91.
[214] Ascough 2003: 186.
[215] But note that Malherbe (2006: 35-48, 67-78) shows the more proverbial nature of this language. This occupational network does not preclude a household context or association.
[216] Possibly some of them travelled in pursuit of their business and had visited Philippi and become acquainted with the members of the church (Marshall 1991: 125). The marketplace language that Paul uses in Philippians, reminiscent of accounting and bookkeeping (ἡγέομαι, κέρδος, and ζημία; Phil 1:21, Phil 3:7, 8), may bring business or occupational ties to the fore as well, and so Ascough 2003: 118-19, 122 (but may also be commonplace rhetoric like "working with hands").
[217] Witherington III 1994: 137, who adds that her associates were "now on business in Rome."

slaves or freedmen.[218] This is a synthetic reading of Acts and Philippians, however. Acts does not specify that Lydia was imperial personnel, and Paul never mentions a Lydia.[219] Plus, there were many varieties of purple that emperors did not monopolize. This particular proposal is fraught with problems and should not be taken seriously.

On the other hand, imperial slaves and freedmen did engage in "private" commercial and industrial enterprises on their own account or in activities not connected with their service to the emperor.[220] The textile industry is a line of work that explains how certain members of Caesar's household and the Philippians were connected. A funerary altar from Miletus, for example, records a slave of Nero–imperial position unrecorded–as an attendant or official in the purple business, probably a purple-dyers association (ἐπάνω τῶν πορφυρῶν).[221] Though the inscription is fragmentary, at least some of the other purple-dyers were likely not imperial personnel. The association, moreover, would have had many geographical and occupational affiliates in their network. Purple-dying was practiced all along the Ionian and Carian coasts, at Sardis, Miletus, Phokaia, Hierapolis, Teos, and Kolophon, and on the islands of Rhodes, Cos, Nisyros, and Chios.[222] Related groups who worked in cloth or weaving are also attested in numerous sites in Asia Minor: Tralles, Hierapolis, Philadelphia, Smyrna, Thyatira,

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[218] Horsley 1982: 27-28.
[219] Lightfoot 1953 [1868]: 56-7.
[220] Weaver 1972: 7.
[221] Labarre and Le Dinahet 1996, no.19 render the phrase as "préposé aux teinturiers en pourpre."
[222] Benda-Weber 2013: 179.

Pergamum and Ephesos.[223] Trade in textiles circulated people and material throughout Asia Minor, but also back and forth from the province's littorals to numerous markets around the empire. Much of this activity passed through the Ephesos, as the "Customs Law of Asia" documents.[224] The textile business, therefore, like Hyacinthus' Dokimeion quarries, stretched across interrelated cities, and relied on an intricate network of people in related services (producers, merchants, shippers, etc.).[225]

Specifically, two Macedonian cities, Philippi and Thessalonike, were in the textile circuit with Asia Minor during the imperial period. There is evidence for purple-dying associations (πορφυροβάφοι) in both places. In Philippi a now-lost inscription records a purple-dyer named Antiochus from Thyatira, Lydia who was also a benefactor of the city,[226] while at Thessalonike a guild of purple dyers honored a Menippos Severos, son of Amias, also a Thyateiran.[227] This is the backdrop for how the author of canonical Acts conceived of Paul's social networks. But in fact, there is evidence for a centuries-long trading network of purple textiles between Asia Minor and Macedonia.[228] If certain members of Caesar's household were involved in the textile industry, business ties with a geographically contiguous market would bring them into contact with the Philippians regularly.

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[223] For epigraphic catalogue see Harland 2003: 39.
[224] Cottier and Corbier 2008: 34-35.
[225] For example, Teos manufactured cloaks and overcoats from Milesian purple and wool. See Benda-Weber 2013: 175, 185, and fig.115
[226] Philippi[1] 697. Undated.
[227] *IG* X,2 1.291 (late 2nd cent. CE).
[228] Benda-Weber 2013: 186.

This is only one possible explanation, though. There were other occupational networks that would have done the same.[229] The shared occupational network between the Philippians and others in the *familia Caesaris* could also have been more official in nature. Lukas Bormann, for example, suggested that the Philippians did not leave Paul alone "in his litigation in a Roman court (ἐν πραιτωρίῳ)." Instead, they used their connections to freedmen and slaves of the imperial house (Phil 4:22)–"who within the Roman provincial social structure were quite influential personalities"–to influence "the legal proceedings against Paul."[230] Likewise, Helmut Koester proposed: "[i]t is possible that Epaphroditus, a citizen of [Philippi], was sent to Ephesos because he may have had special connections to (imperial) freedmen of the *praetorium*–a very influential group especially at the time of Claudius and Nero–and could therefore influence the outcome of Paul's trial."[231] These explanations are conceivable, though a bit too fanciful as they add details to Paul's life from Acts or 2 Timothy ("trial").

An alternate explanation is that members of Caesar's household periodically travelled on official business to Philippi where they interacted with some of the Philippians. In this scenario the *familia Caesaris* Paul mentions would have included

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[229] Sailing, for example. See Titus Aurelies Strenion, imperial freedman, who was a patron, along with many others, of the association of sailors and accountants at Ostia (*CIL* 14.250; 152 CE). At the time of the roster Strenion was probably no longer in imperial service. But he may have been involved in accounting and/or sailing while still in the service, which would explain his connections to this association and its members.
The roster also includes an *Augustalis*, D(ecimus) Statilius, possibly a public slave (*serv*us *publicus*) of Ostia, M(arcus) Publicius Ostiensis, several freedmen, including two freedman named T(itus) Cornelius Felix, and another named C(aius) Cornelius Felix.

[230] Bormann 1995: 213.

[231] Koester 1995: 55.

imperial couriers (*tabellarii*) who frequented port cities and important urban areas, in addition to provincial capitals, carrying formal correspondences. Here the reader will recall the *familia Caesaris* of couriers from Narbo; imperial couriers also appear in Ephesos. Some in the Philippian community could have interacted with such persons in the imperial administration. By comparison, slaves in public administration at Corinth (e.g. Erastus, Quartus), whom Paul and others knew, must have regularly interacted with the imperial administration. This interaction informs the situation at Philippi. Indeed, evidence for imperial personnel has survived in each of Paul's major stops in the Aegean–Ephesos, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth–and several places in between.[232] So an official network circuit among imperial personnel in the Aegean rim, including Ephesos and Philippi for instance, would be expected (Figure 9). That particular network may have included members of the Philippian community.

[232] In addition to evidence already cited for Ephesos, from Philippi: Philippi[1] 282=*AE* 1935, 47b (36-7CE) and *AE* 2001, 1785; from Thessalonike: *IG* X,2 1 740 (2nd -3rd cent. CE), *AE* 1993, 1396 (2nd cent. CE), *IG* X,2 1 471 (3rd cent. CE), and *AE* 2006, 1292 (3rd cent. CE); from Corinth: *ICorinth* 8,3 62= *AE* 1964, 167 (late 1st cent. CE), *ICorinth* 8,2 76 (1st cent. CE), *CIL* 3.7268, and *ICorinth* 8,3 67 (3rd cent. CE).

Figure 9. The Aegean Rim and Its Microregion.

Cultic Networks

A cultic network refers to common connections to a specific cult or sanctuary, or devotion to a particular deity or deities.[233] Ethno-geographic networks, family networks, and occupational networks typically had some kind of cultic elements as well. Activities included worshipping particular gods and goddesses through offerings, sacrifices, prayers, singing, mysteries and so on. We have encountered several examples already:

[233] Harland 2003: 44.

The imperial freedman Nicephorus who was a *prytanis* in Epehsos shared a cultic network with other devotees of Artemis–among other deities–and the imperial freedmen who made offerings to the goddess Kore shared a cultic network with the Sardians.

Paul participated in a cultic network focused on worship of the Jewish god and that god's son, Jesus. The Philippians were part of this network as well–participants of favor with me, as Paul says (Phil 1:7)–and had joined in the network some years earlier (Phil 1:5; 1 Thess 2:2). Members of Caesar's household also seem to have shared in a cultic network with Paul and the Philippians.

Some scholars have explained the "religious" interconnection between Caesar's household and the Philippians by suggesting that there may have been imperial slaves in Philippi who belonged to the Philippian church.[234] In this case, the "Christian" members of Caesar's household, would have sent greetings to their counterparts in Philippi.[235] It is true that imperial personnel were often members of cultic associations.[236] And it is also true that the greetings in Phil 4:22 would be appropriate if the recipients were of a similar social makeup.[237] But we do not know if there were imperial slaves in the Philippian community like we know that they were in Paul's locale. This suggestion must remain, therefore, a distant possibility.

Others have suggested that "Caesar's household" in Phil 4:22 referred to another

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[234] Michaelis 1935: 75.
[235] Müller 1993: 210; Hawthorne 2004 [1983]: 281; Marshall 1991: 125; Martin 1976: 170.
[236] See, e.g. Cinnamus an imperial slave and *dispensator* (*CIL* 6.8826=*ILS* 7276).
[237] Ascough 2003: 128.

house-church or house-churches.[238] Indeed, one bold scholar translated Phil 4:22: "all the saints who belong to the church of Ephesus also greet you, especially the imperial slaves."[239] To be sure, there were cultic associations who had imperial slaves or freedmen as members. For example, Titus Flavius Antiochus, a second-century imperial freedman in Corinth, was a leading member (*primi*), or patron, of the association of *Lares* of the Divine House (*Collegio Larum Domus Divinae*).[240] Here the association represents a network "cluster" devoted probably to the imperial *familia*.[241] There were also associations devoted to a particular deity that had many or even predominantly imperial personnel as active members, as is the case in the cult of Asclepius and Hygeia in second century Rome.[242]

The suggestion that the saints from Caesar's household formed a church goes beyond the evidence. Although a *familia Caesaris* was an association of sorts, Paul forwarded greetings from particular people (οἱ ἐκ τῆς)–how many we cannot know–within that *familia Caesaris*. The greetings in Phil 4:22 thus resemble Paul's greetings to "those who belong to" (τοὺς ἐκ τῶν) the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus, i.e. slaves or freedpersons within households whose other members and heads were not believers (Rom 16:10, 11).[243] The "saints" of Caesar's household could have been a

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[238] Bormann 1995: 211; Reumann 2008: 739. Similarly Taylor 2012: 94.
[239] Michaelis: "es grüssen euch ferner alle Heiligen, die zur Gemeinde von Ephesus gehören, besonders aber die Kaisersklaven" (1935: 75).
[240] *ICorinth* 8,3 62= *AE* 1964, 167.
[241] Compare *CIL* 14.3561.
[242] See discussion in Chapter 3.
[243] Friesen 2010: 250.

densely connected cluster, but this does not mean that they qualified as an assembly (ἐκκλησία).

Moreover, the term "saints" was not necessarily code for "church," much less for "Christians"–an anachronism for Paul's time. While "church" could encompass "saints,"[244] the two were distinct. For example, Paul writes to "all the saints in Philippi" (Phil 1:1), but later singles out the Philippians (Φιλιππήσιοι) as a very particular assembly (ἐκκλησία; Phil 4:15). The term "saints" had a range of meanings. Significantly, even though Paul used the term for people he knew (Rom 16:26-7), he also used "saints" for those did not know as well, did not work with as closely (e.g. Rom 1:7), or who represented a wider geography.[245] The social range of the terminology is further illustrated in Phil 4:21-22 where Paul distinguishes between "brothers/sisters with me" (οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἀδελφοί) and "all the saints" (πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι).[246] The appellation "brothers and sisters" intimates Paul's closest ties–his "dears" (ἀγαπητοὶ; Phil 4:1)–as does the title coworkers (συνεργοί), which he uses for select persons like Clement (Phil 4:3). And Paul was certainly not equally intimate with all saints everywhere. Thus, I would suggest that Paul used "saints" in Phil 4:22 as a reference to the particular imperial slaves that were known by his Philippian followers to be participants in the wider cultic network of the Jewish god.

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[244] E.g. 1 Cor 14:33, "all churches of the saints" (ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων).
[245] See also, Rom 15:25-26 and 2 Cor 1:1, "with all the saints in the whole Achaea" (σὺν τοῖς ἁγίοις πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ).
[246] See Phil 1:12, 14; 3:13, 17. Compare 1 Thess 2:17, 5:26; 1 Cor 16:20.

How and why they may have joined in the cultic network and what it meant deserves comment. Despite the long tradition that Paul converted them, we simply do not know.[247] More important are the social networks. If persons in a *familia Caesaris* observed enough endorsement or witnessed sufficient value of a particular deity from people with whom they had socially powerful relationships then they too were likely to switch divine patrons.[248]

In this light, Paul begins to look like a "weak tie" in the network configurations. In terms of social network theory, this means Paul was not involved with many aspects of the strong-ties that these saints had with others in their networks.[249] From their perspective, Paul could have been a long-distance tie, more like a random contact or acquaintance, and vice versa from Paul's perspective.[250] What is more, Paul could even have been a latecomer to already established networks between the Philippians and imperial slaves in Asia Minor. As a weak tie Paul was still important because he bridged different segments in the cultic network; weak ties are essential for the "small-world phenomenon"–popularly known as six degrees of separation.[251] Yet, the cultic connection evinced in Phil 4:22 was likely an outcrop of other and older social formations and pre-existing bonds–family, kinship, friendship, business, etc.– that members of Caesar's household shared with others. Their "conversion," if one wishes to use that term, was

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[247] On χάρις as term of divine benefaction and patronage see Crook 2004: 132-48.
[248] Collar 2007: 153.
[249] Kadushin 2012: 30-31. See also Granovetter 1973.
[250] Collar 2007: 151. Network proximity does not equate to physical proximity (Tartaron 2013: 196).
[251] See Watts and Strogatz 1998. The concept of a *small world* describes the relatively small distances that link a given node to all nodes in a given network (Kadushin 2012: 28). Weak ties were also good at disseminating information across a network (Collar 2013: 11).

predicated upon their previous participation in a social network–whether in Ephesos, Asia Minor, or even Philippi.[252]

Additionally, participation in a cultic network meant something other than "churchgoing." Networks have different interactional dynamics.[253] There are different types of links with varying exchanges, directions and frequencies of interactions.[254]
A final example: A certain Sagaris was an under-slave of Alcimus, an imperial house-born slave of the emperor and a cashier (*arcarius*). When Sagaris was in Corinth he offered a votive to Sacred Venus and the *Gens* of the Corinthian Collegium of either the *Augustales* or the *Augusti*, depending on the interpretation.[255] Now, in Corinth Sagaris participated in a cultic network devoted to particular deities, and he had some connection to an association. He might even have had "strong ties" to that association, or been a member. But we do not know if the cultic aspects were in the primary role for his relationships. We know from another inscription that this same Sagaris spent time in Athens as well, had relationships there (*consilium*), and he commemorated a friend on an epitaph. Sagaris was probably all over Achaea, in fact, since this second inscription specifies that his superior Alcimus was a cashier "of the *province* of Achaea."[256] Whether, how, or in what ways he maintained cultic ties to the collegium in Corinth is

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[252] Lofland and Stark 1965: 871.
[253] Structural diversity (*multiplexity*) in role relations of individuals within the network (White 1992: 26).
[254] White 1992: 26-7.
[255] Veneri / sacrum / et Genio colle(gii) / Aug Corinth(i) / Sagaris Alcimi / Aug(usti) vern(ae) ark(arii) vic(arius) / vot(um) posuit libens / animo sacerdotio/ […]VLHI SOIH[…](*CIL* 3.7268= *CIL* 6.8818=*ILS* 1503). The inscription was found in Altinum (modern Altino) northeastern Italy.
[256] Dis Manibus / Q(uinto) Turranio Maximo / praeceptori et / amico bonorum / consiliorum / Sagaris Alcimi Aug(usti) ser(vi) / vernae arcari provinc(iae) / Achaiae vicar(ius) / merenti memoria(m) (*CIL* 3.556 = *ILS* 1504.

unknown.

The upshot is that any strong ties that saints from Caesar's household had with the Philippians may not have been related solely to their shared cultic network. The cultic links could be simultaneous, supplementary, or even secondary to other linkages.[257] The "saints" probably had some connection to an association in Ephesos or Asia in addition to their connection with the Philippians. But they could have been on the periphery of a community not in a core. They could have been regular participants in cultic activities. Or they could have been irregular participants, but at important times or in significant ways shared (κοινωνία) in this business of giving and receiving, as Paul puts it (Phil 4:15), either with Paul himself or with other saints.[258] Finally, in view of their position as imperial property and their other relationships in that *familia Caesaris*, we should be cautious in assuming exclusive loyalty to the Jewish god and/or his son. As we will see in the next chapter, there were certain cultic practices that imperial slaves and freedmen were expected to perform as part of the imperial *familia*.

CONCLUSION

I have argued three broad points in this chapter. First, Paul wrote Philippians while in the Aegean region, most likely from Ephesos, but elsewhere in Asia Minor is equally possible. The key term *praetorium* (Phil 1:13) does not indicate a Roman provenance for Philippians, but a provincial, administrative building. Moreover, a *praetorium* building is

[257] This refers to *multiplexity*: there may be many networks that connect, in different ways, the same nodes of people (Kadushin 2012: 28).
[258] This would be "transactional content" in social network analysis (White 1992: 26).

one, but not the only, setting in which to account for the saints in Caesar's household (Phil 4:22). The provincial setting of Paul's letter, and the connectivity of the Aegean, is also important for understanding what Caesar's household was, what they were doing, and their connection to Paul and the Philippians. Second, Caesar's household was a *familia Caesaris*, a group of the emperor's slaves, in Ephesos or elsewhere in Asia Minor. Some in this *familia Caesaris* most likely worked in the mid- to lower-levels of imperial administration. The "saints" among that *familia Caesaris* may have had similar skill sets, but it is unlikely that all in that *familia Caesaris* were adult male functionaries. To assess the social and economic profile of this group I used an analogue based on epigraphic evidence and discussions about the Erastus Paul mentions (Rom 16:23).

Third, the backstory to Phil 4:22 is that imperial slaves in this *familia Caesaris* probably already knew members of the Philippian community. For this reason, Paul passes on special greetings from the saints to the Philippians. How well the Philippians and the imperial slaves knew each other, and by what connection can only be guessed. However, the various social networks I presented offer clues to those relationships. Some of the networks apparently included ethno-geographic, family, business, and cultic ties.

Networks are not static, however; they are dynamic and fluid. Ties can fragment. Networks can die. Whether the relationships between those in Caesar's household and the Philippians endured is anyone's guess. The fate of those imperial slaves is lost to history. In his four more extant letters, Paul never mentions saints in Caesar's household again. Consequently, their historical import must remain in the Aegean. Their impact in Christianity's supposed "rise" is tenuous. But as we will see in chapter four, on later

Christians the effect of this reference to Caesar's household in Phil 4:22 would be quite powerful nonetheless.

CHAPTER 3

'CHRISTIANS' IN CAESAR'S COURT: MATERIAL CULTURE IN SEVERAN ROME

"*Sometimes epigraphic pitfalls emerge as windfalls. More often, they deceive the unwary into believing things that are not so*." ---John Bodel[1]

INTRODUCTION

In March of 1830 there was a marvelous discovery in Rome. A group working on a road at the Borghese estate on the north side of the Via Labicana uncovered a huge sarcophagus with "a remarkable" Latin inscription "in good letters." The English reads:

> For Marcus Aurelius Prosenes, freedman of the Emperors, chamberlain to the Emperor, procurator of the treasury, procurator of the imperial estate, procurator of gladiator-shows, procurator of wines, appointed to the service by the divine Commodus, and a most dutiful and well-deserving patron, his freedmen from their own money caused this sarcophagus to be adorned.[2]

The notice of the find, signed by the Commissioner of Antiquities Mr. Carlo Fea, emphasized that this Prosenes was an important person in ancient Rome: as a former slave he held some of the most valuable positions and was personal attendant to the

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[1] Bodel 2001: 48.

[2] "Via Labicana. Nei primi dello scorso marzo a sinistra della via Labicana, un mezzo miglio prima di giungere a Torre nuova, alcuni lavoratori di strada in terreno del sig. principe Borghese, rinvennero un sarcafago molto grande, nel quale è rimarcabile soltanto la iscrizione, in buoni caratteri, di un liberto di M. Aurelio, e Lucio Vero, poi cameriere di Commodo, che aveva sostenute varie utili cariche domestiche dell'imperatore padrone: M. AURELIO. AUGG. LIB. PROSENETI A CUBICULO AUG. PROC. THESAURORUM PROC. PATRIMONI PROC MUNERUM PROC VINORUM ORDINATO A DIVO COMMODO IN KASTRENSE PATRONO PIISSIMO LIBERTI BENE MERENTI SARCOPHAGUM DE SUO ADORNAVERUNT" (Fea 1830: 123).

emperor.[3] The next year a second notice for the monument appeared. Again the Latin inscription was recorded, but this time the author of the piece, Giorlamo Amati, also called attention to "two little defective lines" on the sarcophagus' upper right band. The first expert editors of the sarcophagus, Amati says, did not think to read the Latin. Both he and the illustrious Emiliano Sarti did. The English reads:

> Prosenes, gathered to god on the 5 Nones…nia in the consulship of Praesens and Extricatus for the second time, as he was travelling back to the city from the expedition. His freedman Ampelius wrote this.[4]

Not only was Prosenes a major political figure, Amati notes, but his promotion led to major military dignity as well.[5] So end the notices.

A decade or so later Giovanni Battista de Rossi saw Prosenes' sarcophagus perched at the then-new entrance to Villa Borghese. The timing was fortuitous. De Rossi was in the midst of compiling his epic collection of all Christian inscriptions found in Rome and its surroundings.[6] The phrase "gathered to god" (*receptus ad deum*) that Prosenes' freedman Ampelius etched on the side was perfect. De Rossi must have immediately understood the significance: this was a Christian inscription. But it was no

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[3] Fea 1830: 121-4. The find spot was a half-mile west of *Castello di Torrenova*. When the notice of the find was first published in May of 1830 the interest was in Prosenes' position in the treasury and its application for contemporary taxation issues. The author of the notice and the Commissioner of Antiquities, Carlo Fea, gave no mention of any Christian content.

[4] "I bravi primi editori di esso non seppero leggere le due righe un po'guaste, poste sulla fascia alta del flanco destro. Con ciò dimostrarono di non valere ad *extricare* mai nulla di buono. Queste, dopo di me, furono lette benissimo dall' egregio sig. professore Sarti. PROSENES RECEPTUS ADDEUMVNON….NIAPRAESENTE ET EXTRICATO II REGREDIENS IN URBE AB EXPEDITI ONIBUS SCRIPSIT AMPELIUS LIB" (Amati 1831: 256).

[5] Amati 1831: 255-6. It is included in a list of select inscriptions of slaves and freedmen. This time the focus of the discussion was on the word *castrense*, and its meaning in relation to military retinue.

[6] Frend 1996: 77.

ordinary Christian inscription. It was thought to be the earliest example from Rome (182 to 217 CE). And more extraordinary, the person recorded as a Christian was an imperial freedman, once manager of the entire imperial household and the right-hand man of the Roman emperor Caracalla.[7]

In the remainder of the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, several other inscriptions naming slaves or former slaves of the emperors and bearing ostensible Christian symbols and phrases were harvested from Rome, its environs, and the "Christian" catacombs. De Rossi (1822-1894), and his followers Orazio Marucchi (1852-1931), Ernst Diehl (1874-1947) and Antonio Ferrua (1901-2003), the founders of "Christian archaeology and epigraphy,"[8] then catalogued or in some cases re-identified, the inscriptions as Christian artifacts. As some of the first fruits from the new field, a number of these inscriptions were also circulated for a wider audience in the *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* (1863-1894), begun by de Rossi, and the *Nuovo Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* (1895-1922). Besides their presence in newly available catalogues and periodicals many of the inscriptions appeared in the first handbooks on "Christian epigraphy," often grouped under natural headings like "imperial civil servants" or "slaves and freedmen."[9] But what was once a relatively random collection of a few inscriptions from alleged Christians in the *familia Caesaris* has grown and morphed. Now it seems to

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[7] The inscription entered de Rossi's famed collection as *ICUR* 1.5, and until more recently this was thought to be the earliest Roman Christian inscription (Frend 1996: 77). See de Rossi's comments at *ICUR* 1: 9-10.
[8] Testini 1980 [1958]: 70-72.
[9] See e.g. Kaufmann 1917; Marucchi 1912: 223-9

be a corpus with the preeminent Prosenes as the exemplar.[10]

For many scholars these stones are especially useful for explaining early Christian history. At the basic level they represent a particular group–some would say acquaintances–of influential Christians who served the emperors in an era when Christianity was coming "out of the shadows" onto the world stage.[11] More importantly, for some this material confirms the socio-political "rise" of Christianity, verifying references from both earlier and later Christian literature by showing that Christians were "a persistent presence in the palace" from the time of Paul.[12] By the 250s, one author writes, there were adherents of Christianity among the Roman social élite–senators and equestrians–but these inscriptions indicate "Christianity having penetrated the administrative ranks of the imperial palace earlier than expected."[13] There were probably more inscriptions besides the corpus, another scholar writes, thus more Christians at this time, besides Prosenes, who were probably in high-status occupations in the imperial household.[14] As "a social unit" or an "enclave" they "made an impact:" by the time of

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[10] Notably, Hans Instinsky's short piece "Marcus Aurelius Prosenes, Freedman and Christian in the Imperial Court" (1964) began to interpret the inscriptions together and in light of Marcus Aurelius Prosenes. The German title is *Marcus Aurelius Prosenes, Freigelassener und Christ am Kaiserhof*. Inscriptions have been both added to and shed from the list. For example *Onesimus Augg(ustorum) lib(ertus)* from the cemetery of Domitilla (*CIL* 6.10253=*ILCV* 1.705a). See Instinsky 1964: 121. The number now stands at roughly ten inscriptions.

[11] Frend 1984: 272-274. McKechnie: "some of the dedicators and the deceased may have been acquainted with each other" (1999: 439).

[12] McKechnie 2001: 141, 138-9; Beard, North, and Price link Marcus Aurelius Prosenes with "the existence of Christian ex-slaves at the imperial court, as already in the time of Paul" (1998: 334); Kyrtatas 1987: 129; Clarke 1971: 121.

[13] Lee 2015: 40.

[14] McKechnie 1999: 440, 441.

Severus Alexander the tide was running their way,[15] and by the end, "his house consisted for the most part of believers," says Eusebius.[16] Thus, frequently underlying the analysis of this material is the anticipation of Christianity' triumph or victory in the Roman Empire.[17]

In what follows I will begin to demonstrate the biases and presuppositions behind such analyses. A careful study will show that the material evidence is much more complex than previous works have indicated. To be sure, there probably were imperial personnel at this time who would have called themselves, or have been recognized as, Christians. We can assume that some put up inscriptions. Yet the inscriptions that have been cited do not provide what many have wanted: hard, authenticating evidence for Christian imperial slaves and freedmen in Severan Rome.

Rather than supposing that the inscriptions stand-in for Christian imperial personnel, I will show that they really resist categorical or exclusive claims such as "Christian" or "Christianity." I will show this by contextualizing the inscriptions as commemorative monuments in particular archaeological settings, and by using comparanda other than inscriptions classified as "Christian." Once the inscriptions are set on a continuum of funerary discourse and practice, the ostensible "Christian" content opens up to various interpretations beyond covert or overt professions of faith. But, as we will see, even when the inscriptions record language or symbols that could be interpreted

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[15] McKechnie 1999: 440 and 2001: 137. *HA Alex. Sev.* 29.2 and 43.6-7.
[16] ἐκ πλειόνων πιστῶν συνεστῶτα (*Hist.* 6.28.1).
[17] McKechnie 2001: 137-49. Finn 1982: 34; Frend 1984: 328.

as Christian, we cannot simply make the leap of identifying the imperial slave or freedperson as Christian. The category Christian–conventionally understood as an exclusive religious identity opposite 'paganism'–is probably too simple to capture the complexity of their lives. So I view the inscriptions as lenses for conceptualizing how imperial personnel might have interacted with Christian groups in Rome, and as samples for rethinking how they could, in real terms, simultaneously serve the emperors and worship Christ. Ultimately, we will find that 'Christian' had a number of registers and was fleshed out in several different ways for imperial personnel, who were identified fundamentally by their relationship to another divine figure: the emperor.

METHOD MATTERS: CONTEXT, CONTENT, AND CATEGORIES

Before examining the material evidence we must first consider three methodological approaches that have facilitated the identification of Christian imperial slaves or freedmen. The first issue to address is archaeological context. In some cases, especially before the twentieth-century, the inscriptions of imperial personnel were found "in" or thought to derive from Christian contexts such as Rome's catacombs or the cemeteries above. There is a centuries-old tradition that interprets Rome's underground burial chambers as Christian burial space, and some of the most influential catacomb scholars such as De Rossi and his protégés were chief proponents of this tradition.[18] When they

[18] See Bowes 2008 and Hirschfeld 2008, and especially her comment on p.12 that "much of the past academic and popular writing about the catacombs viewed them as sites of connection to a venerated

uncovered or rediscovered catacombs inscriptions, the physical and archaeological setting by default rendered the inscription a Christian one. The burden of proof was to show that an inscription was *not* a Christian one. This method then abetted the claim that an imperial slave or freedman recorded on a catacomb inscription was a likely a Christian. A classic example of this interpretive line is Orazio Marucchi's analysis of an inscription found "in the cemetery of Priscilla" on the Via Salaria Nova. The marble, which is broken in three places, indicates that the early third century inscription was a plaque (*titulus*) for a family tomb (See Figure 10).

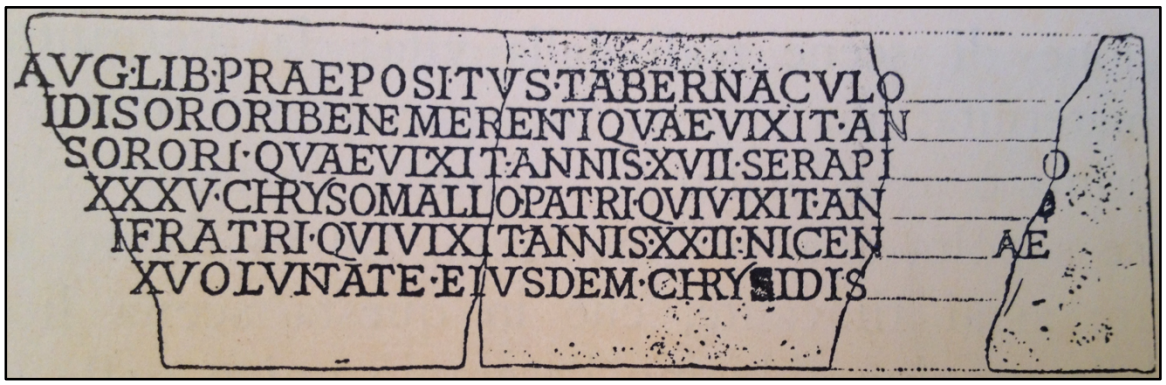

Figure 10: Titulus of Imperial Freedman Tentmaker from Priscilla Catacomb. Drawing by Marucchi.

The owner of the tomb and dedicator was an imperial freedman–the name is lost to the lacuna–who was also president of a tent-makers association (*Aug(usti) lib(ertus)*

religious past that could be used to legitimize the religious present." Suffice it to say, there was often an apologetic bent to previous catacomb archaeology.

praepositus tabernaculo[rum---]).[19] The inscription was found a short distance from another one that enclosed a burial niche (*loculus*) and commemorated a wife named Bibia Corinthia. The wife, whose cognomen is Corinthia, suggested to Marucchi that she was probably from Corinth originally. Meanwhile, Marucchi could not help but run with thought that Aquila and Priscilla (or Prisca), the companions the apostle Paul met in Corinth, were also buried in the same cemetery.[20] (On de Rossi's hypothesis, based on Rom 16:3-5, it was thought that the couple had returned to Rome where they founded a house church on the Aventine Hill, later known as *La chiesa di Santa Prisca*, which was connected to the large cemetery on the *Via Salaria* and named after Priscilla).[21] The inscription for an imperial freedman in charge of tent-makers, combined with an inscription for a woman from Corinth, both of which were discovered in a cemetery that was connected to Priscilla and Aquila, who like Paul were tent-makers, led Marucchi to exclaim: "Who would deny some probability that the inscription [of the imperial freedman] now discovered belonged to the descendants of companions of Aquila and Prisca?"[22] The implication is thus that the imperial freedman, like Prisca and Aquila, may have been a follower of Christ.

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[19] The Latin text reads: […] Aug(usti) lib(ertus) praepositus tabernaculo[rum---] / [--- Chrys]idi sorori bene merenti quae vixit an[nis---] / [---] sorori quae vixit annis XVII Serapi[oni avo] / [qui vixit annis X]XXXV Chrysomallo patri qui vixit an[nis---] / [---] fratri qui vixit annis XXII Nicen[i filiae] / [--- e]x voluntate eiusdem Chrysidis […] (*ICUR* 9.25069).

[20] Marucchi 1932: 492.

[21] Marucchi 1908: 255; De Rossi 1867: 44-45. This idea was the product of mixing 2 Timothy 4:19 and Medieval traditions.

[22] Marucchi 1908: 256. See also his brief comments in 1912: 228.

Such was the tangled logic of the day. It derived in large part from a reliance on textual sources the most important of which is a sentence from the third-century text known as the *Refutation of All Heresies* traditionally attributed to one Hippolytus of Rome.[23] According to the traditional interpretation the text, at the beginning of the third century Pope Zephyrinus put Callistus, the slave of a Christian imperial freedman, Carpophorus, in charge of "the cemetery" (εἰς τὸ κοιμητήριον κατέστησεν) of the Christian community.[24] De Rossi identified this cemetery with the so-called Catacomb of Callistus on Via Appia. Since the nineteenth century the passage from the *Refutation*, along with a few other choice texts, have given some scholars carte blanche to presuppose that the other catacombs were also collective and exclusive Christian burials spaces that the ecclesiastical authorities oversaw.[25] It was only natural, then, that material related to imperial personnel found in the Christian cemeteries-cum-catacombs, would be catalogued as Christian,[26] and only one easy step farther to make a case that an individual recorded on an inscription was probably a Christian.[27] Thus the 'list' of imperial slaves and freedmen who were apparently Christian could now be readily augmented and thereby certify the growth of the Christian movement in the Severan period.

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[23] Bowes 2008: 576. The authorship of the *Refutatio omnium haeresium (Philosophoumena)* has been disputed. See discussion in Chapter 4.
[24] Hippolytus, *Haer*. 9.12. Pergola 1998: 21.
[25] See, e.g. Fiocchi Nicolai 2002: 13, 24. For the history of catacomb research see Hirschfeld 2008: 11-38, Fiocchi Nicolai 2002: 9-13. On the methodology see Bowes 2008: 575-79, 582-86. But see also the comments of Fiocchi Nicolai on the Catacomb of Callistus and private ownership (2002: 23).
[26] A parallel methodology was used for material found in the "Jewish" catacombs. For the parallel history of research see Dello Russo 2010 and Kraemer 1991.
[27] See Saller's fifth methodological point: there is a "risk of simplifying context by sharply separating ethnic and religious groups and reifying them with the historian's hindsight" (2008: 6). Again, see Kraemer 1991.

The traditional picture of so-called Christian catacombs has more recently been entirely undercut. Simply put, the catacombs were not exclusive Christian cemeteries that a central Roman Church instituted and maintained.[28] There is now undeniable evidence for "contemporary burial side by side, throughout the third and fourth centuries, of Christians and pagans, not only within a single tomb monument but in adjacent subterranean spaces connected by tunnels and galleries."[29] As Éric Rebillard has shown, the word "cemetery" used in the *Refutation of All Heresies*, [30] which has propagated the traditional picture, did not designate a communal burial ground in the more modern sense, e.g. a churchyard, until the sixth century. Rather, at the end of the second century CE the term in both Greek and Latin (κοιμητήριον /*coemeterium*) referred more precisely to a tomb, and in the coming centuries, the word began to refer to martyrs' tombs or the shrines surrounding them (*martyria*).[31] A single tomb could be established for a collectivity of people, such as a family, or families, or a *collegium*, but the collective

[28] Bodel 2008: 203.
[29] Bodel 2008: 182, 188. See also Johnson 1997: 37-59. The nuclei of the Priscilla Catacomb, for example, were originally owned by the senatorial Acilii family. The separate hypogea may have been occupied by specific groups within the aristocratic household (slaves, freedpersons, etc.), or by unrelated individuals, families, or other groups admitted into this particular large area, which was probably of little use for anything except burial after the pozzolana mine was exhausted and the hydraulic system had dried out. One such group, the one using the *Cryptoporticus*, must have been Christian (or dominated by Christians) at least from the Gallienic period (253-68 CE) onwards, and there is noticeable Christian presence elsewhere. But again, this does not render the entire vast area of the cemetery Christian (Borg 2013: 105).
[30] Hippolytus, *Haer*. 9.12.
[31] Rebillard 2009: 3-4, earlier study in Rebillard 1993; Bodel 2008: 203.

space was available because an individual owned the tomb and/or surrounding area and gave access by gift or purchase.[32]

Even if the deceased was a member of an association (*collegia*), the family, or a (broader) kinship network, played a primary role in funerary practices. And throughout the third and fourth centuries many Christians continued to be buried in family tombs, i.e. monuments of the traditional sort, long after catacombs came into widespread use.[33] But the catacombs, which had begun as private burial plots, continued to be controlled and managed by families at least through the mid-fourth century.[34] So families, not the church, continued to bury the dead and commemorate them where and how they saw fit,

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[32] Bodel 2008: 186-7; Lampe 2003: 27. See brief discussion of *collegia* and associations in the third section below. Thus, several of the early nuclei of catacombs (*hypogea*) were developed on private land (e.g. Catacomb of Priscilla), and others on imperial property (Catacombs of Domitilla, Sebastian, Praetextatus, and Pamphilius). See Borg 2013: 75, 105.

[33] Bodel 2008: 188. Yet, not all followers of a "particular religion" were buried in such collective monuments, nor was burial in such places normally restricted to devotees of a "particular religion" (Bodel 2008: 186, 187). Two inscriptions are important here. The first a second century inscription of Valerius Mercurius et al which states that his *monumentum* was opened for his freedmen, freedwomen, their descendants and those "beloning to my religion" (*religionem pertinentes meam hoc*). The full text is Monumentum Valeri M/ercuri et Iulittes Iulian/i et Quintilies Verecundes li/bertis libertabusque poste/risque eorum at religione/m pertinentes meam hoc a/mplius in circuitum circa / monumentum lati longi / per pedes binos quod pertin/et at ipsum monument(um) (*CIL* 6.10412). But as Bodel notes, the monument was simply a family tomb that also extends (*pertinēre*) to others in the family network with a similar sense of duty (*religio*) to Mercurius' god. The other inscription from Velitrae (modern Velletri) belonged to a Faltonia Hilaritas and states she built at her own expense "this burial-place" (*hoc coemeterium*) and donated it to her "religion" (*religioni donavit*). The full text is Faltoniae Hilaritati / dominae filiae carissimae / quae hoc coemeterium / a solo sua pecunia fecit / et hu{h}ic religioni donavit (*AE* 1923, 66). The context of the inscription is suspect, however: it was discovered on a tomb, in reuse, near a small basilica at Solluna. Since the marble plaque had clamp marks the discoverer (Mancini) thought that the inscription originally hung at the entrance to the small burial basilica, which Faltonia supposedly built. Even if this were the case, Faltonia may simply have opened up to her coreligionists a little funerary basilica, built at her own expense and for her own burial, "rather than establish a place of communal burial." See Rebillard 2003: 30-31. Both inscriptions were catalogued as Christian, *ILCV* 3824 and *ILCV* 3681a, respectively.

[34] Bowes 2008: 586.

and families were as often as not, of "mixed religious persuasion."[35] On the other hand, early Christian bishops seem to have taken little interest in the funerary behavior of contemporary Christians and evidently exercised only minimal control over 'cemeteries' before the time of Constantine. The only pre-Constantinian text that directly deals with the issue of where Christians should or should not be buried (Cyprian, *Ep*. 67.6.2) in fact shows that Christians did *not* avoid burial with 'pagans.'[36] According to Cyprian, a bishop in Spain named Martial, along with his sons, frequented a *collegium* that had Martial's sons buried with "strangers among profane graves (*profana sepulcra*)."

To bring the reinterpretation of the catacombs into sharper focus, consider the following example. During late second to early third century, whole sections of the Praextextatus Catacomb–the area known as the "region of the cooks" (*regio cocorum*)–were likely reserved for imperial personnel who worked in the palace kitchen.[37] We know this because Galleries E_{17} and E_{19} preserve monumental graffiti on the vaults that read respectively "of the cooks 11" (*cocorum* XI), "of the cooks 6" (*cocorum* VI), and "of the cooks 30" ([*cocorum*] XXX).[38] At the same time, several *tituli* found at ground level above the catacomb originally belonged to the families and kinship networks of imperial freedmen who were the head chefs (*archimagiri*) at the palace. These tombs for particular

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[35] Bowes 2008: 586.

[36] Bodel 2008: 182-3. Contrary to de Rossi's thinking there were also no official Christian funerary societies (*collegia tenuiroum*) or specifically funerary *collegia* of any sort. On the older views concerning the typologies and functions of Roman *collegia* see Harland 2003: 28, and the important chapter on the relationship to Christian origins in Perry 2006: 49-60.

[37] Borg 2013: 86. On the early use of the area around the Praetextus catacombs and the presence of material culture from imperial personnel see Spera 2004: 21-9.

[38] *ICUR* 5.14815.a-b, and restoration suggested by Borg.

cooks were reserved for themselves, their wives, children, but also for their freedmen, freedwomen, their posterity, and for those who were still slaves of the emperor (*quos Caesari nostro*).[39] These inscriptions also indicate that the imperial freedmen participated in a *collegium* of imperial slave and freed cooks (*collegium cocorum Augusti nostri quod consistit in Palatio*).[40] Indeed, their family tombs were in part protected by the *collegium* of which they were participants–if not leading members. Other members of the *collegium* would wind up below these tombs in the *regio cocorum*. But none of this evidence indicates that the imperial cooks, whose epitaphs show up in the catacombs below, were Christians. Admission to burial in the underground chambers (*hypogea*) and its extensions did not in fact "depend on faith" but on membership in a social group–the personnel of the imperial kitchen–who may or may not have counted Christians among their number.[41]

Because the catacombs were not exclusive or static contexts, the inscriptions of imperial personnel were often reused within the burial contexts that later Christians increasingly populated.[42] For example, a *titulus* from the ground tomb of an imperial

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[39] *AE* 1973, 84.

[40] See for example the tomb of Titus Aelius Primitivus, imperial freedman, and his wife Aelia Tyche, and imperial freedwoman, who were involved with the collegium. Their tomb was also reserved for the freedmen and freedwomen and their posterity (*CIL* 6. 7458 and *CIL* 6.8750). One of these inscriptions was found in a landslide in the catacomb itself, attesting to a tomb monument above the hypogea. The inscription belonged to the imperial freedman Marcus Aurelius Hermes (*AE* 1937, 159). Another example is *AE* 1973, 84. See Borg 2013: 86.

[41] Borg 2013: 87.

[42] See Saller's fourth methodological point: "the context for any given artifact or text was not static… We need to imagine house tombs, the *columbaria*, and the catacombs as works in progress, rather than the finished product left to posterity. And if the finished house-tomb or *columbarium* or catacomb was the result of a series of decisions over time, we often do not know which member of the family or community made each decision" (2008: 6).

freedman cook named Eustathes was broken in six pieces but later reused in the 'main hall' (i.e. the *Magna Spelunca*) of the Praetextatus Catacomb.[43] The "D" of the dedication to the Roman chthonic deities, "To the Divine Shades" (*Dis Manibus*), is still preserved on the stone (See Figure 11).

Another *titulus*, documented as "in the cemetery of Praetextatus," belonged to the tomb of an imperial freedman named Marcus Aurelius Secundus. But the stone was reused on the backside for an epitaph of one Hercules. This secondary Latin inscription has since been cross-catalogued as Christian and dates to the fourth century, though the original inscription for Secundus belongs to the late second or early third century.[44]

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[43] *AE* 1973, 84. The stone, which measures 50 x 84 x 3cm, was found in April of 1952, in the eastern part of the corridor. When found the stone was broken in 6 pieces. In the same period the inscription of the imperial freedman Hermes mentioned above was also reused (*AE* 1937, 159). See Ferrua 1973: 28. Ferrua does not explain how the inscription was reused.

[44] *CIL* 6.13225. dep(ositio) Herculi VI kal(endas) oct(obres) b(ene) m(erenti) i(n) p(a)c(e) (*ICUR* 5.14329). In another case, an epitaph from the Catacomb of Priscilla commemorates the imperial freedman Marcus Aurelius Primosus, his freedmen, freedwomen, and their posterity. The stone was reused on the backside during the fourth century to commemorate a grave-digger (*fossor*) named Festus who lived thirty-eight years. Festus is shown holding a pickax in his hand. Text: D(is) M(anibus) / M(arcus) Aurelius Primosus Aug(usti) lib(ertus) / memoriolam vetustate d<e>lapsam / refecit sibi libertis libertabusq(ue) / posterisque eorum // Festus vi(xi)t n(umero) XXVII (*CIL* 6.13188=*ICUR* 7.18785). The stone is now lost.

Figure 11: Inscription of Eustathes, Imperial Freedman. Reused in the Praetextatus Catacomb.

Notably, the Praetextatus Catacomb developed contemporaneously with the Catacomb of Callistus a few hundred meters away on the west side of the Via Appia. As one might expect, an epitaph for an imperial freedman and palace chef (*archimagirus*) named Symphorus, was discovered by de Rossi in the Catacomb of Callistus.[45] There Symphorus' epitaph was reused to actually enclose a *loculus*. But the stone had undoubtedly belonged to the Praetextatus complex nearby.[46] While the inscription of Symphorus is not catalogued as Christian, the example shows that we cannot automatically link the epigraphic material of a *loculus* with the identity of the person

[45] *CIL* 6.8751.

[46] Bodel 2008: 192, n. 28. The stone slabs and tiles sealing the *loculi* in the catacombs of Rome frequently were made of reused material, sometimes only fragments of earlier monuments (Carroll 2006: 265).

lying within.[47] The catacombs' grave-diggers (*fossores*) were thrifty and worked quickly. The material left behind by imperial slaves and freedpersons–one of the most epigraphically active groups in the Roman Empire–was ripe for reclamation. The upshot is that even if an inscription for an imperial slave or freedperson originated in a catacomb (e.g. Marucchi's imperial freedman tent-maker), and even if it was found *in situ*, one cannot take for granted that the inscription, much less the person(s) the stone represents, was Christian.

But scholars have found other ways to 'discover' Christians via inscriptions, and this leads to a second methodological issue: content. Conventionally, whether the inscription came from a supposedly Christian context or not, if accepted Christian content appeared on an inscription then the inscription, and by association the person(s) recorded, was identified as Christian.[48] An earlier example of the method comes from Cecil John Cadoux who calls attention to "[a]n inscription of about the time of Carcalla [that] mentions an imperial freedman who was almost certainly was a Christian."[49] The inscription is another *titulus* belonging to an imperial freedman named Lucius Septimius Severinus, who "built the tomb (*munimentum*) with the enclosed field (*agello*) for himself, and his freedman and freedwomen and their posterity" (*CIL* 6. 26259).[50] For

[47] The majority of the tombs still intact do not have any inscription (Mazzoleni 2002b: 148).
[48] McKechnie 2001: 142. For an overview of the history of epigraphic study, and the principles derived from de Rossi and the 'Roman school' see Carletti 2008: 17-18.
[49] Cadoux 1925: 392, and n.7.
[50] The editors of *CIL* 6 do not mention these ostensibly Christian symbols, but record only the text and its location. For the decisive content, and perhaps a nudge towards the interpretation, Cadoux relied on his friend and fellow New Testament scholar C. H. Dodd who had seen the inscription in the Monastery of Saint Paul Outside the Walls (*Il Monastero Di San Paolo Fuori Le Mura*) and copied it.

Cadoux, Severinus was "almost certainly a Christian" because the stone "is headed with the symbol of fishes and anchor, which is generally accepted as a mark of Christianity."[51] In Cadoux's project the inscription was a nice example of "Christians at Court and among the Governing Classes" during the period of 180-250 CE, and illustrated the growing social prestige of Christians and their entrance into political life. We will see this again.

A core tenet of Cadoux's method–which others have repeated–is that a recognizable and discrete Christian epigraphy or iconography, principally funerary, began to develop in the early third century.[52] While this early material is characterized as diverse, irregular, episodic, and innovative[53] the inscriptions have tended to fall into a tripartite typology of minimalist-laconic, neutral, or what I call hybrid. For example, and to take these in turn, the earliest Christian epitaphs, Danilo Mazzoleni explains, are simple, usually with just the deceased's name–an extreme conciseness that has been termed "archaic laconism" (*laconismo arcaico*).[54] But often times on or near the text the name is combined with "the first *Christian* symbols," above all the anchor and fish, which evidently "accentuate the Christological and soteriological significance of the

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[51] Cadoux 1925: 392, n.7.

[52] Carletti 2008: 24. This is different than Finney's statement: "Christians produced nothing materially distinct before the third century" (1994: 131).

[53] Mazzoleni 2002a: 12. Carletti 2008: 27, 30.

[54] Mazzoleni 2002a: 12; Cooley 2012: 230; Carletti 1988: 128-131. Onomastics has been another, often circular, way to identify Christians: "a single name on Christian inscriptions," Pasquale Testini says, would suggest *un'onomastica Cristiana* from the beginning" (1980: 369). More recently Mazzoleni 2015: 450-2; Green 2010: 200. See the monograph by Kajanto 1963. Paleography has also been a telltale: "the quality of writing on Christian gravestones was decidedly inferior to that of pagan ones" (Mazzoleni 2002b: 150). The principle, called the formal criterion (*criterio formale*), derives from de Rossi. The more an inscription presents itself as shoddy and rough in its formal, technical, execution, the more likely the probability that it could be traced to a Christian context, and many times this is based on a 'pre-understanding' that Christians would have privileged the content over the form (Carletti 2008: 17).

inscriptions."[55] Thus, in this circular path, an inscription is Christian and the person for whom it stands was a Christian because the inscription contained "Christian symbols."[56]

But how does one know what a 'Christian' symbol was in this incipient period? Often the analyses have been proleptic, supposing that the earliest figurative manifestations (e.g. fish or anchor) could "already" be considered "precocious vectors"[57] of a specifically Christian epigraphic tradition. Two literary references hold up this supposition. Clement of Alexandria (*c*.150-215 CE) stipulated that "our seals" (or ring signet, σφραγίς) should be a dove, a fish, a ship, a lyre, or an anchor (*Paed*. 3.11).[58] And in a discourse on baptism and salvation Terullian refers to Jesus Christ as "our fish" using the Greek word ἰχθὺς (*Bapt*. 1.3).[59] To be sure, the images that Clement and Tertullian mention appear on funerary incriptions in Rome and in the catacombs.

Yet, Clement did not invent a Christian iconographic repertoire–the images were generic and the stonecutters' stock-in-trade–[60]nor could he determine the effective meaning of those symbols. Likewise, while Tertullian's audience probably understood his rhetorical play–Jesus as a fish must have meant something to them–this does indicate that ἰχθύς was part of a particular Christian iconographic practice in Rome at that early time. On this score, Graydon Synder's point still rings true:

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[55] Mazzoleni 2015: 450 (italics mine), Mazzoleni 2002a: 12, and Mazzoleni 2002b: 151.
[56] See also Testini: "un'iscrizione si dice Cristiana quando porta un sengno evidente di Cristianesimo" (1980: 329).
[57] Carletti's term (2008: 31).
[58] Carletti 1986: 27-28.
[59] Tertullian's line reads: sed nos pisciculi secundum ἰχθὺν nostrum Iesum Christum in aqua nascimur, nec aliter quam in aqua permanendo salvi sumus.
[60] Finney 1994: 111.

> one must avoid supposing there is a theological meaning to a symbol that can be adduced from contemporary or even later theological literature. Polemical authors wished to defend, explain, or upgrade the faith practices of the people. It must not be assumed…that the literary usage and the popular symbolic expression–even though chronologically simultaneous–are actually identical. Indeed, one would suppose that extensive, forcible discussions in the literature regarding a sign would necessarily imply an attempt to alter the meaning of it.[61]

As other sholars have since noted, in the third century the symbols of fish and anchor were not exclusive to Christians and not necessarily theological ideograms.[62] Rather, the iconography had long been regarded as a metaphor for reaching a safe harbor at the end of one's journey, and has parallels in Greco-Roman art as maritime themes were generally popular in late antiquity.[63] So based on the iconography alone Cadoux's "almost certainly a Christian" interpretation of the imperial freedman Severinus breaks down.

Second in the typology of inscriptions are the 'neutral' ones. These are not explicitly Christian artifacts–at least at first glance. Many of this type derive from the catacombs and may again include only a name. In these 'neutral' cases, however, the inscriptions could still be Christian based on the context or content. For example, when inscriptions are neutral, says Mazzoleni, "only the context of the provenance of the epigraphy" allows one to judge "in favor of its Christianity."[64] That is, the idea that

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[61] Synder 1985: 13, though Synder himself seems to forget his own advice later (p.24-5).
[62] *Contra* Snyder who thought early Christians created the anchor symbol *de novo*, and that it had very little metaphorical meaning outside Christian circles (1985: 15).
[63] Cooley 2012: 232, 234. Jensen 2000: 47-48. For example, depictions of fish at Ostia were once interpreted as proof of the town's Christian residents, but today those images have been shown to be more multivalent than once believed (Boin 2013: 39).
[64] Mazzoleni 2002a: 12.

catacombs were Christian contexts means even the supposedly neutral epigraphic content is really Christian. Moreover, symbols like the dove, palm, branch, anchor, fish, William Tabbernee says, often "help to identify as Christian otherwise religiously neutral inscriptions."[65] Again, a circle: inscriptions are Christian because of Christian symbols, and once *some* 'Christian' symbols are shown, then other symbols are shown to be Christian, too.

The term 'neutral' is not all that neutral, then.[66] But the notion of neutrality is also tricky because it rests on a particular narrative. The underlying and popular assumption is that that Christians were persecuted and in conflict with the Roman state.[67] Rome's discriminatory "legal" situation then drove Christians to epigraphic neutrality.[68] "Given the precarious legal status of Christians prior to Constantine," Taberrnee explains, Christians erected religiously "ambiguous epigraphic expressions on monuments in places where they could be seen by anyone." He continues: "From *c*. 200 CE, however," when "Christian communities were able to own their own cemeteries," the "most famous of these" being "the catacombs in Rome," then "open expressions of Christianity in 'secure' burial locations were not only possible but became common."[69]

By contrast, many scholars have suggested that Christian imperial slaves and freedmen enjoyed a "privileged protection" from legal denunciation and the empire's

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[65] Tabbernee 2008: 127.
[66] Mazzoleni 2002b: 152.
[67] On this assumption see the recent book by Candida Moss (2013).
[68] See Peter Brown's comments (2013: 64).
[69] Tabbernee 2008: 128.

"outbreak against the Christians"[70] because of their "solid occupational status," prominent place in Roman society, and "personal relationship of patronage to the emperor."[71] This group then had "confidence" to publicize their allegiance to Christ,[72] since either during or shortly after Severus' reign "a number of imperial slaves and freedmen in Rome believed it was possible to put up *explicitly Christian grave-inscriptions* without fear of reprisal."[73] Their open publication also made them trendsetters: "their influence was beginning to make other Christians want to assert themselves by commissioning similar gravestones."[74]

These explanations run headlong into contradiction, however. At the same time it is alleged that Christian communities, as early as 200 CE, were secure in their communal, underground "hollows" (catacombs) to express their religious orientation, the majority of the earliest catacomb inscriptions–including some from Christian imperial personnel–are still deemed neutral.[75] Likewise, imperial personnel are simultaneously affirmed as protected, strong, free to be overt, yet, as we shall see, some of the inscriptions from 'Christian' imperial slaves and freedmen, whether above or below ground, are

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[70] Frend 1984: 293-4.
[71] Lampe 2003: 334; McKechnie 1999: 439; Instinksy 1964: 127.
[72] Green 2010: 115.
[73] McKechnie 1999: 440. My emphasis.
[74] McKechnie 1999: 441.
[75] According to one survey of the inscriptions from the original nuclei of Priscilla, Callisto, Calepodio, Novaziono, and Maius, 81% (430/ 531) were neutral with only the remaining 19% specifically Christian (Carletti 1988: 118-19). Out of the roughly 40,000 surviving inscriptions from catacombs, moreover, the "religious inscriptions" constitute only a small minority, and most of them date to the post-Constantinian period (Mazzoleni 2002b: 147).

nonetheless considered 'neutral' or 'cryptic.'[76]

The persecution narrative raises other historical problems. It would be insensitive to ignore that in certain times, in specific places, and for certain reasons, some followers of Christ were persecuted and killed. Yet, this does not apply to Rome during the Severan period–as far as we can know–and certainly not to imperial slaves and freedpersons of that time. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case.[77] Christian apologists like Tertullian and Eusebius, who were never shy about pointing out persecutions and martyrdoms, look to Severan Rome as a model of tolerance, and underscore that there were Christians who served in the emperor's house without any problems. What's more, a persecution narrative does not explain epigraphic content. It turns out that concealment in neutrality–and any of the pesky descriptors for this–has more to do with modern misunderstanding of ancient epigraphic intentions and stylistic conventions than anything else.[78]

The third group in the typology–the hybrid inscriptions–combine 'pagan' and Christian content. According to Mazzoleni, many early Christian funerary dedications demonstrate "deep ties with pagan epigraphy," distinguishing themselves only, and not

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[76] Listen to McKechnie: "In the early third century, Christians in the imperial household began taking advantage of their *untouchability* by putting up gravestone which noted, sometimes *cryptically*, that the deceased had been a Christian" (2001: 142). My emphasis. Worse, the persecution narrative breeds other confusing pigeonholes for the material such as 'phanero-Christian' or 'crypto-Christian'–mystifying monikers that try to describe a Christian object that is intentionally clandestine, arcane, deceptive or invisible to non-Christians. The terms were applied originally to ostensibly Christian inscriptions from the east, Asia Minor and Phrygia, and notably the Abercius inscription–often thought to be the first Christian inscription. For an old example see Kaufmann 1917: 59-60. For a more recent example see: McKechnie 1999: 439. For a strong and playful critique of the ideas see Finney 1994: 288-9.

[77] Rowan 2012: 220. Also Clarke 2005: 616-17 and Sorti 2004: 117-134.

[78] See recent discussion in Chiricat 2013, especially 203.

always securely, by "a few clues (*indizi*)."[79] Besides the "Christian symbols," additional indicators might be the "forms of salutation or acclamation," the "communal element," and the "basic attitude," examples of which would be the mention of brothers or peace.[80] These internal indicators are then weighed against each other to determine if the overall content "tips the scale in favor of the *Christianity* of the text."[81] The result is that an inscription commemorating a person to the Sacred Divine Shades but also recording that the person sleeps in peace is still called a "Christian inscription."[82] Weighing epigraphic content as if on a scale, however, seems a bit facile.

The issue is determining when epigraphic content (e.g. symbols, phrases) functioned as overtly Christian, and knowing that it in fact did. As currently articulated, and as most would agree, 'Christian' epigraphy derived from the standard 'pagan,' 'secular'–or now appearing more frequently–"Classical" or "Roman content," but was given "new meaning that alludes to Christ and salvation."[83] Another term for this phenomenon is the "Christianization of epigraphy."[84] But scholars have stressed a slow transformation and a date no earlier than the end of the fourth century for this

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[79] Mazzoleni 2002a: 12.
[80] Carletti 1988: 133-34.
[81] Mazzoleni 2002a: 15 (my emphasis) on the inscription for the imperial freedman Marcus Aurelius Prosenes, "*pendere la bilancia a fovore della cristianità del testo*."
[82] Testini 1980: 331 on the epitaph of Vettia Simplicia (*ICUR* 3.9221), which dates to the fourth century. The text reads: D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / Laevia Firmina / mater Vettiae / Simpliciae filiae / suae quae vixit an(nos) / XLIII menses VI ma/ter filiae inco<n>/parabili fecit / Sim/pliciae quae dorm/it in pace.
[83] Mazzoleni 2015: 450. See also Carletti 1997: 144-45 and Di Stefano Manzella 1997: 307. Carletti 2008: 30; Carletti 1988: 115.
[84] Carletti 2008: 9-13.

phenomenon.[85] Even at the turn of the fifth century iconographic conventions were not completely settled–all the more reason not to assume epigraphic continuity between, say, the fourth and early third century.[86]

Knowing that particular content was indeed Christian, moreover, even in the post-Constantine period, is not as straightforward as some have let on. For example, there are a number of fourth or fifth century bronze rings from Ostia etched with the "chi-rho" sign–usually understood as shorthand for 'Christ.' But, as Douglas Boin asks, "Are the objects really 'Christian'"? His answer is that a "straightforward interpretation of the artifact is impossible on sociological grounds" because, among other reasons, identity is contingent on the "irretrievable belief of the subject involved."[87] What exactly was the ring saying and to whom? We do not know. Nor should we expect that monuments in antiquity had a single, unaltered, or clear meaning. From the time of its construction an inscribed object was open to a plurality of interpretations and reinterpretations, with

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[85] Cooley 2012: 229, 231. Similarly, Solin writes "un formulario tipicamente cristiano del gergo sepolcrale si sviluppa molto lentamente e relativamente tardi" (2004: 220). Material expression "became more visible from the second half of the 4th century onwards," writes Peter Talloen, "and *eventually* resulted in a canonic Christian iconography (2011: 575). My emphasis. See also the comments of Elsner: "meanings could be limited" and "particular symbols (not least the cross and the fish in Christianity and the menorah in Judaism) did come to acquire specific meanings of cult affiliation for particular religious groups at the local level. But whatever specific meanings such symbols may have come to hold for local Jewish and Christian communities, these cannot be certainly generalized to meanings for 'Judaism' or 'Christianity' as a whole before the end of the fourth century at the earliest, and they cannot be certainly held to have exclusive use or significance for any one community until the same time" (2003a: 125).

[86] Moreover, the newer studies of the catacombs modifies the more conventional view that the transformation was a result of exclusive communal Christian cemeteries where the commemorators could display a very uniform set of sentiments and symbols that were understood by that community (Carroll 2006: 267-8).

[87] Boin 2013: 39, 42-3.

various voices–ancient and more modern–seeking to steer audiences to single authoritative and definitive interpretations.[88]

Let's return to the imperial freedman Severinus, then. His inscription is probably not in its original form. The stone, which is currently embedded in the cloister wall of *San Paolo Fuori le Mura*, has clearly been cut. It lacks the typical bands and a textual margin so that the edges of several letters (e.g. S at the end of line 5, and O at the beginning of line 6) are diminished. More telling, at the top of the stone the tip of the anchor is cut off (See Figure 12).

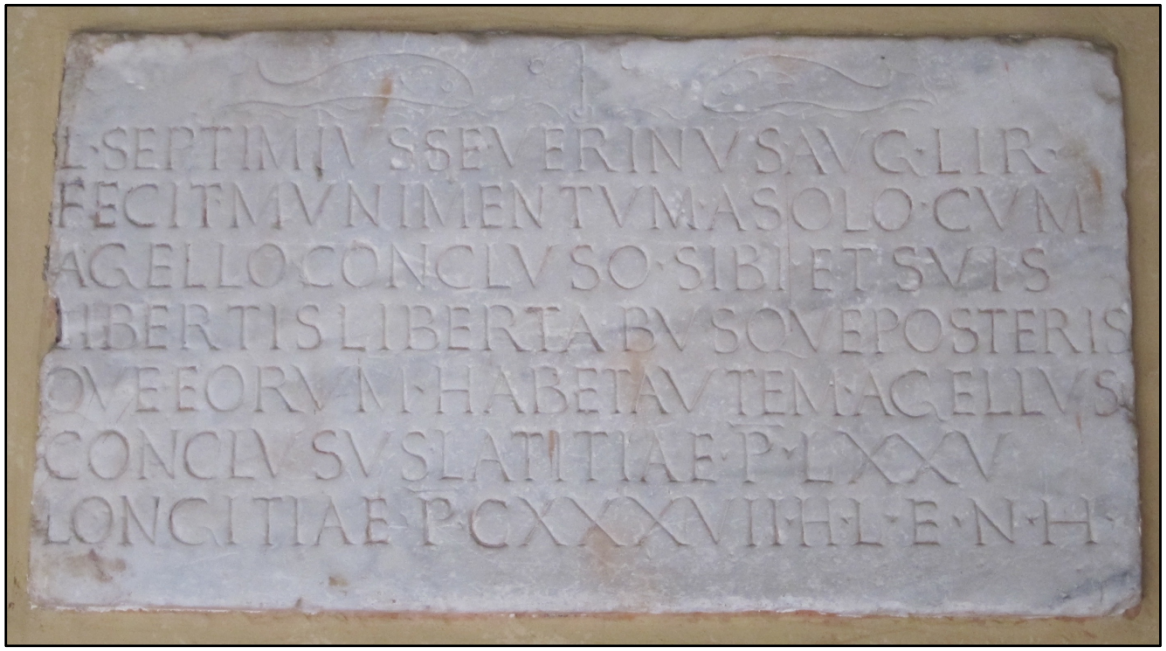

Figure 12: *Titulus* of Imperial Freedman Lucius Septimius Severinus, showing fish and anchor with anchor tip cut off. Author's Photo.

[88] Mitchell 2008: 310.

This suggests, therefore, that the inscription is missing its first line(s), and it would not be surprising if that line had summoned the Divine Shades (*Dis Manibus*) or comparable deities. When the inscription was found it may have been missing this line already because of secondary usage. Alternatively, someone could have strategically excised the initial line wishing to preserve and emphasize the nominal Christian content (fish and anchor) over Roman chthonic deities.[89] If this were the case the framing of the content would have been most intelligible at a later time, and in a setting in which the fish and anchor images performed, and were perceived, as more or less exclusive Christian emblems.[90] The Severinus inscription also raises a warning for other inscriptions: we may only be looking at the last of several iterations to a stone and its contents.[91]

Still, even if the Severinus inscription had preserved a commemoration to the Divine Shades this would not, in my view, necessarily "tip the scale" in either direction. The absence of a *Dis Manibus* formula does not scream Christian. Commemoration to the Divine Shades (*Dis Manibus*) appears on inscriptions in conjunction with Christograms

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[89] Other inscriptions catalogued as Christian have erased the DM. Compare the epitaph of Nice by Titus Flavius Hermes from the Catacombs of St. Sebastian. The text is dated to the third century (200-299 CE) and the D and M of Dis Manibus have been erased and replaced with decorative vegetation (*ICUR* 5.12895=*CIL* 6.22939). The image is available at: http://www.archeologiasacra.net/pcas-web/EDB/784/scheda.html.

[90] One way to think about this is what Christopher Fennell calls core emblematic symbols. These symbols summarize the identity of a culture group as a cohesive unit (e.g. national flag). In Fennell's case studies, the material culture and symbolism of African descent groups in Caribbean and South American locations such as Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil developed embellished symbolism out of the blending of diverse African cosmologies, intended to signal the formation of new culture groups and to communicate their sense of solidarity and collective cultural identity (Fennell 2007: 7).

[91] We now know this is the case with the well-known Licinia Amias inscription (*ICUR* 2.4246=*ILCV* 1611b) that contains a dedication to the Divine Shades, an image of two fish and an anchor, and the Greek phrase "fish of the living" (ιχθύς ζώντων). Over at least a century it underwent three stages of modification and only in the last stage, 4th or 5th century, did the monument take on an undeniably Christian tenor. See Cooley 2012: 234; Noviello 2012b: 568; and Carletti 2008: 136, and n.7.

well into the fourth and even fifth century, and it is misleading to expand the DM or DMS abbreviation differently so as to render it as Christian.[92] The fact that individuals recorded on inscriptions what is categorized as both 'pagan' and 'Christian' content is significant. Among other things, it calls into question the usefulness of applying such religious categories to material culture in the first place.

This is the final methodological issue to consider: category. Since their conception the twin fields of Christian Archaeology and Christian Epigraphy have analyzed material culture using religious categories, especially the pagan-Christian taxonomy.[93] More recently many scholars have recognized the problems with this approach. For decades Carlo Carletti has been trying to move the analysis from "Christian Epigraphy" to "Epigraphy of Christians," "Inscriptions of Christians," or now inscriptions of "Christian Commission."[94] As he notes, there were not two distinct and autonomous 'epigragphies,' one pagan and the other Christian, as if they were distinct communicative courses, differing from each other depending on the scope of religious affiliation.[95] Others have likewise realized the need to evaluate so-called Christian epigraphy and burials within a broader epigraphic and cultural context.[96] But for now, at

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[92] Carroll 2006: 266-7; Cooley 2012: 232. This is precisely what ancient Christians did by inserting an "O" between the D and M to stand for 'Dominus.' In Rome's Basilica of San Clemente there are numerous examples.
[93] In the introduction to volume one *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae*, for example, de Rossi established the principle that Christian inscriptions were erected from a religious cause (*religionis causa*) *ICUR* 1.xxxvii.
[94] Carletti 1988 and 2008.
[95] Carletti 2008: 9.
[96] Di Stefano Manzella 1997: 99-101; Panciera 2006; Solin 2004; Rebillard 2009: 13-14.

least, the Christian-pagan divide remains fixed, and must be addressed in scholarly discussions.

One problem is that those who use these taxa have conventionally supposed that infused in the inscriptions are covert, overt, or in any case legible professions of Christian identity. And that identity is a singularly defined Christian identity. Between the end of the second and beginning of the third century, Carletti writes, "a new religious group majority, articulated hierarchically," and "self-perceived as 'orthodox'" sparked the "emergence of a defined identity, which for the first time found a significant sheet of refraction in the epigraphic medium."[97] In other words, the "paleo-Christian epigraphic practice" was a receptacle for a "normative Christianity." Once adopted, this idea leads to other less helpful descriptors for the variable material culture such as 'Gnostic,' 'half-Christian' (*demi-chrétiens*), or "pagan residues."[98]

Certainly, devotees of Christ including some imperial personnel would have set up inscriptions just as devotees of other gods did. Yet, the search for specifically Christian "identity elements" and religious credos in the epigraphic medium–much less normative ones–may be doomed if Christian identity was fluid.[99] And it would be equally doomed if the epigraphic content did not or could not reflect the identity or identities.[100]

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[97] See Carletti 2008: 27-8. Other developments are linked to this as well, such as the new church organization (change from a presbyterial governance to a monepiscopacy, which imposed a single and unitary doctrinal, disciplinary, liturgical system); and a transition to permanent places of assembly and collectively owned cemeteries, both of which are thought to be archaeologically demonstrable (*domus ecclesiae* and catacombs).

[98] Carletti 2008: 25-6. Simonetti 1994: 137.

[99] Carletti 2008: 22-3.

[100] Inscriptions seldom respond directly to the questions we want to ask of them, and the information they

Mutatis mutandis, trying to see through an epigraphic sheet to divine whether this or that imperial slave or freedman was a Christian–as if that and nothing else–may be assuming an impractical framework.

A second problem is what John Bodel has called the "epigraphic bias." Especially with epitaphs the issue is distinguishing commemorative practices–a death-writing discourse–from social or religious realities.[101] The two are not always identical. Additionally, funerary texts and the visual imagery of burial offer idealized representations or roles and relationships in living society.[102] So we always face "the composite semiotics of funerary monuments, which cannot be reduced to the words of their inscriptions."[103]

Moreover, even if "*Christianus*" was etched on a stone, what Christian or Christianity meant is an important question. The answer in the Severan period, as in any period, depends on whom one asks.[104] As Justin Martyr once said, not all who call themselves Christians are Christians.[105] So the author of the *Refutation of All Heresies* and the Roman bishop Callistus appear to differ on the matter–the author does not seem to think Callistus was even a Christian![106] Others in the *Refutation*'s heresiological

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provide is invariably filtered through the medium by which it is transmitted (Bodel 2001: 46).

[101] Bodel 2001: 46.

[102] Saller 2008: 5.

[103] Mitchell 2008: 309. Also Bodel 2001: 25.

[104] See Elsner's discussion of sectarian self-assertion, localism, and competition in early Christian art (2003b: 74-5).

[105] *Dial*. 35. 3-6. See Lieu 2004: 265.

[106] In his tirade Hippolytus relates that Callistus' owner, Carpophorus, tells the urban prefect Fuscianus that Callistus "is not a Christian" (οὐ γάρ ἐστι Χριστιανός; *Haer*. 9.7.9) and later calls Callistus a γόης (*Haer*. 9.7.20), that is, a cheat or impostor, usually associated with magic or wizardry.

"blacklist" had their own views as well.[107] Tertullian and later Cyprian were also trying to define "Christian," as were many others along the way who were working out how to live both as Romans and as devotees of Christ.[108] Christian was not itself a monolithic or exclusive category,[109] nor was 'Christianity' a single, monolithic religious entity.[110]

Thus, when assigned to a cultural artifact like an epitaph the labels "pagan" or "Christian" obscure rather than elucidate the breadth of significance that the object can have in its specific environment.[111] Such labels also simplify what must have been a complex situation for any imperial slaves or freedpersons who would have both served the emperor–in whatever duties (*pietas*) that required–and worshipped, reverenced, or honored Christ. The "cultic gestures" that we might glimpse in the material, would also appear within a range of *religiones* and human relationships.[112]

My goal, then, is to reset the "Christian" articles on a continuum of material culture discourse shared by many groups in Rome and beyond. This contextualization includes a focus on memory (*memoria*) and commemoration, kinship, and ritual. More than 'pagan' or 'Christian' these emic categories help provide a clearer view of the

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[107] Smith 2015: 15. Smith also writes: "Consolidating a variety of Christian groups into one category [heretics] not only obscures differences among these various communities, it also creates a false impression that Christians like Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus all opposed a common opponent" (2015: 54).
[108] For general discussion of Roman and Christian identities see Boin 2015: 36-56. Ignatius of Antioch said there was a difference between being called a Christian and being found one (*Rom*. 3.2-3).
[109] Elsner 2003a: 114.
[110] See Elsner 2003a: 117. On 'Christianity' as a "serious rhetorical concoction" see Kotrosits 2015: 77. The use of the term *christianismos* alongside other ethnic terms such as *ioudaismos*, *hellenismos*, and *barbaros*, indicates that it hardly means anything similar to the modern word "Christianity"–an "abstract-doctrinal notion" (Lössl 2010: 17-18). The term 'pagan' is equally problematic and needs fleshing out. See Boin 2015: 112-18.
[111] Boin 2013: 43.
[112] Elsner 2003a: 126-7.

social, religious, and cultural milieu of the inscriptions. They should also help illumine the producers and audiences, some of whom were the emperor's slaves and freedpersons.

THE HARD EVIDENCE: CHRISTIAN IMPERIAL PERSONNEL?

Most of the inscriptions I examine below share a pedigree. They are considered some of the earliest known Christian inscriptions. Consequently, they have been studied as a corpus. Under the umbrella of 'Christian inscriptions' they have been compared primarily with each other and with inevitably later Christian inscriptions so that, to co-opt Jonathan Z. Smith, any sense of parity with non-Christian materials is largely unknown.[113] And because the transliterated texts of these inscriptions have been printed in widely available Christian epigraphic catalogues, less work has been allocated to reconstructing the particular contexts–archaeological, cultural, social, religious–in which these originally three-dimensional monuments were set. I attempt to redress both limitations, especially by drawing on inscriptions from other imperial personnel. The order in which I present them begins with one from Ostia. The rest are from Rome: two are from the catacombs, followed by a family tomb, then an epitaph that uses Christian epigraphic discourse. The three richest in information and most important for traditional arguments I save for the end.

Callidromus

[113] Smith 1990: 85.

Sometime around the year 1825 an inscription for a certain Callidromus was found in Ostia. The stone was first brought to the Vatican Museum, then later appeared in the Lateran Museum–a Papal museum for which de Rossi collected the ancient Christian inscriptions–[114] before returning to the Vatican Museum (See Figure 13). As the large size (62.5cm x 120.3cm) indicates, at one time the stone was used to enclose a tomb (*lastra di chiusura*).[115] There is also erasure in the final line, which indicates that at least part of the text has been reworked. It reads:

> Callidromus ex disp(ensatore) hic d[ormit---] / signo Leucadi anima bona q[ui vixit an(nos)---]/tianus Aug(usti) lib(ertus) adiutor proc(uratoris) sum[mi choragii---]/ et Seia He{e}lpis fili(i) dulcissimi et Va[leria…] / Crescentina co(n)iux eius [+++++[---]]
>
> Callidromus a former *dispensator* s[leeps here]…nicknamed Leucas, a good soul, who lived X years and Y months. The following set up this stone: –tianus, imperial freedman, an assistant to the procurator of central supplies…and Seia Helpis, his sweetest children, and Valeria Crescentina his wife.[116]

Depending on how one interprets *ex disp(ensatore)*, Callidromus either had a position in the *dispensator* office or was a former *dispensator*. In any case, his work involved managing accounts. Though an imperial *dispensator* could acquire substantial wealth, the reader will recall, he typically remained a slave for most of his life.

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[114] It is likely that this inscription entered the halls of the Lateran Museum when the collection was expanded in 1854 under Pope Pius IX.

[115] A similar inscription from Ostia is the epitaph for F. Terentia Sabina by M. Mollicius Celerinus (SBAO Inv. 8997) found in the collection of reused material of the late antique synagogue. The shape, size, and hand, as well as the marble are all very similar.

[116] *CIL* 14.1877=*ILCV* 575. My translation.

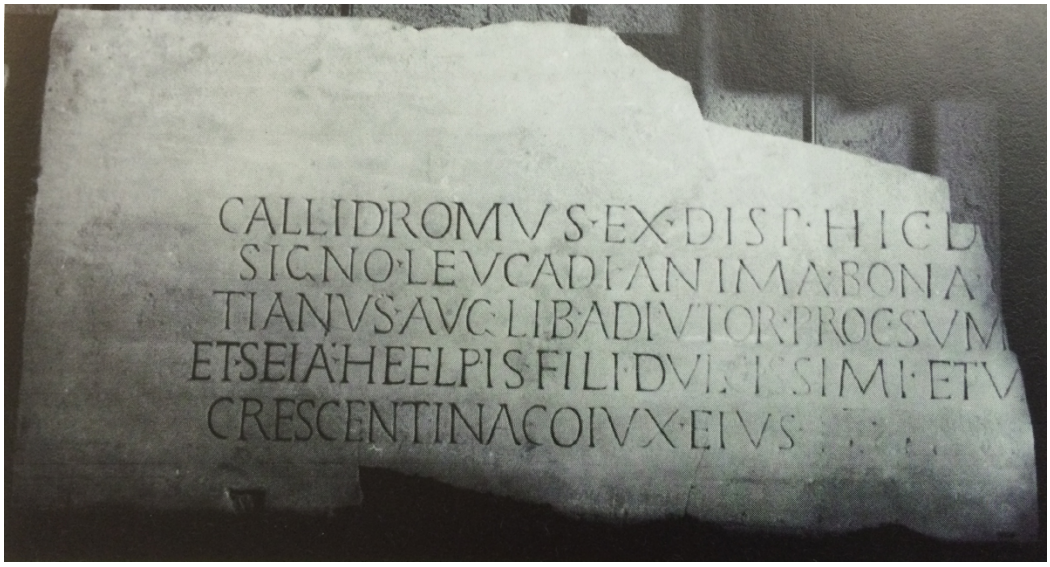

Figure 13: *Lastra di Chiusura* of Callidromus with Imperial Freedman Son as Dedicator. From Ostia Antica

The restored phrase "*d*[*ormit in pace*]," or sleeps in peace, has usually been taken as discretely Christian phrasing.[117] Based on this content several readers besides de Rossi, Diehl, and Marucchi suggested that Callidromus was a Christian.[118] Others have proposed that along with Callidromus, his imperial freedman son and Seia Heelpis his daughter were also Christians. Paul McKechnie argues, for instance, that the name Heelpis, which he translates as "(ἡ ἐλπίς: 'The Hope') is "strongly suggestive of

[117] McKechnie 1999: 432. Herman Dessau originally catalogued the inscription in 1887 (*CIL* 14.1877) after de Rossi transcribed it. It appears in Marucchi's 1912 handbook, in Diehl's 1925 Christian catalogues (*ILCV* 575), and it appeared in Instinksy's 1964 corpus.
[118] Marucchi 1912: 229.

Christianity."[119] To illustrate this he cites the "numerous uses of ἐλπίς with the definite article in the New Testament, including 1 Tim. 1:1 ('Christ our Hope') and 1 Pet. 3:15 ('the hope that is in you')."[120]

I agree that the phrase "sleeps here in peace" may have been used by Christians, but there are still a few considerations. The date is most likely outside of the Severan period, perhaps a generation or more later. Based on Callidromus' detached nickname (*signum*), and the title *ratio summi choragi*, the inscription belongs to the third century.[121] But 200 CE is just the *terminus post quem*; the *signum* is attested from the start of the third century and became more common only later.[122] For instance, the *signa* were found among the Roma aristocracy of the fourth and fifth centuries.[123] Moreover, the stone is broken along the right side rendering the critical phrase "sleeps in peace" a nearly complete restoration. And while it might be a fair restoration–there would surely have been enough room on the right for two more words–the other inscriptions from Ostia and Rome that read "hic dormit in pace" date later than the early third century.[124] It was most likely for this reason that even Marucchi set off this inscription from the rest in his "Offices and Professions" section as "of a later date."[125]

While Callidromus seems to have been a slave, it is not entirely clear that he was

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[119] McKechnie 1999: 430, n.8.
[120] McKechnie 1999: 430, n.8.
[121] Weaver 1972: 231. Fora 1996: 30.
[122] Salway 2015: 376.
[123] Wilson 1998: 56-57
[124] As McKechnie himself points out (1999: 432)
[125] Marucchi 1912: 229, no. 265. The wife's *nomen* V(aleria) might also suggest a date towards the middle of the third century, at the earliest.

an imperial slave. The lack of an imperial title (*Aug*.) is glaring.[126] His son was an imperial freedman in the imperial bureaucracy, but Callidromus would not have to be an imperial slave for his son to become an imperial freedman. This suggests that Callidromus was a slave *dispensator* for another body, whether public, private, or military.[127] After all, *dispensatores* were not unique to emperors or the imperial bureaucracy, as the stereotypic scene from Petronius' *Satyricon* depicts.[128]

Furthermore, the name "Seia Heelpis," which has been marshalled as additional evidence, probably has nothing to do with Christianity. To render Heelpis as "*the* hope" and then summon New Testament verses is a desperate methodology. Yet, the method shows just how intent scholars have been to find Christians, especially seemingly powerful ones, in the imperial household. More likely, the double "e" in the name Heelpis is not a Latinization of the Greek definite article (ἡ) and an onomastic reference to a scripture, but an orthographic variant.[129] "Hope" is not necessarily a Christian name, either. Many more inscriptions from Ostia bearing the name "Helpis" include no hints of

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[126] McKechnie 1999: 430, n. 9. So compare the phrases Felicianus Aug(usti) n(ostri) verna ex dispensatorib(us), who set up an epitaph for his son in Lugudunum, modern Lyon (*CIL* 13.1824); Diogene Aug(usti) ser(vus) ex disp(ensatore) who set up an epitaph for his wife in Rome (*CIL* 6, 8828); on the epitaph for Cinnamo Augg(ustorum) / ex dispensa/toribus / Augg(ustorum) from Pagus Fificulanus, modern Paganica, Italy (*CIL* 9.3580).

[127] See, for example, the following: on an epitaph from Sitifis (modern Setif, Algeria) a certain Victor is described only as "*actor ex disp(ensatore)*" (*AE* 1942/43, 61); from Theveste Numidia one Adventus calls himself "*Adventus verna ex disp(ensatore) leg(ionis) III Aug(ustae)*" (*AE* 1969/70, 664), though compare *CIL* 8.3291. From Carthage, on an epitaph for his adopted son (*alumnus*) a certain Anicetus calls himself "*ex disp(ensatore)*" (*CIL* 8.24687).

[128] Petronius, *Sat*. 30.9. See also *CIL* 6.9323.

[129] See Fora 1996: 30.

"Christianity."[130] The imperial freedman Publius Aelius Agathemer, for example, reserved a tomb for himself and his freedwoman (i.e. formerly his slave) named Aelia Helpis, along with his other freedmen, freedwomen, and their posterity.[131] In another case an imperial freedman named Publius Aelius Symphorus set up an epitaph for his partner (*contubernalis*) Aelia Helpis who died age sixteen.[132] The first name of Callidromus' daughter, Seia, is also a Roman agricultural goddess known for protecting seeds, but McKechnie does not mention that.

As a result, the Callidromus inscription should not be utilized to appraise Christians or Christianity in the imperial household of the Severans. The inscription is probably much later (late-third to fourth century), and whether it is Christian is only conjectural even then, though perhaps more likely at this later date. But as we will see again, often epitaphs say more about the commemorators and what they wish to elicit from the audience than they say about the deceased whose voice was, understandably, gone. How the language in this inscription reflected the family's piety is an open question–then as now. Accordingly, I would resist any definitive statement about Callidromus' *religio* or *religiones*. It is more prudent, I think, to say that the person(s) who composed the epitaph may in part have wanted to evoke what s/he thought was a Christian image of death in order to commemorate Callidromus. We don't know if the

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[130] See e.g. *CIL* 14.948; *CIL* 14.1100; *CIL* 14.302; *AE* 2001, 685.

[131] Aug(usti) lib(ertus) / P(ublius) Aelius Agathemer / fecit sibi et Aeliae Hel/pidi libertae suae et / libertis libertabus / posterisque eorum / sevir Aug(ustalis) idem q(uin)q(uennalis) / in front(e) p(edes) XXIIII in agr(o) p(edes) XL (*AE* 1988, 1976).

[132] D(is) M(anibus) / Aeliae Helpidi / P(ublius) Aelius Aug(usti) lib(ertus) / Symphorus patro/nus et contu/bernalis bene / merenti v(ixit) a(nnos) XVI men(ses) V (*CIL* 14.524). for another example of an imperial freedman with a 'Helpis' wife in Ostia see *CIL* 14.821.

imperial freedman son –tianus, Seia Helpis, or their mother Valeria Crescentina chose the epitaph's words, why s/he chose them, and we don't know if or to what extent any of these persons were Christians.

Aurelius Sozon

Unlike Callidromus, the epitaph for the imperial freedman named Aurelius Sozon is from Rome, from within the catacombs, and even belongs to a specific *loculus*. After de Rossi excavated and edited the greater part of the inscriptions from the Catacomb of Priscilla,[133] others were published later by Marucchi, including this one in 1902. Diehl then catalogued it as Christian (*ILCV* 763a). The location of the stone in the catacomb can be retraced rather precisely: it comes from Gallery H, corridor 49. As of 1985 the stone was still in its original place.

The fragmentary marble (173 cm x 19 cm) is in three pieces and encloses a *loculus*. The center piece names Aurelius Sozon as an imperial freedman (*Augg. lib.*), and records that the inscription was dedicated by at least one other person. An anchor is "carved at the end of the text," that is, on the marble piece at the far right. Here is how Diehl, and later McKechnie, records the text:

[...et] Aur(elius) Sozon, Augg. lib(ertus), cognatus, benermerenti posuerunt (*ancora*)

[133] De Rossi first published them in the *Bullettino di archeologia Cristiana* between 1880 and 1894.

The double imperial nomenclature attached to Sozon indicates he lived during the late Antonine period, was manumitted sometime after either 161 or 177 CE, and could have died as late as the early third century.

The most recent treatment of this inscription suggests that the main "evidence of Christianity" is the anchor combined with the lack of "pagan phraseology," such as *Dis Manibus*.[134] The author then adds: "Possibly there was some distinctively Christian phrasing in the lost part of this fragmentary epitaph, but it is perhaps more likely that the wording itself was neutral," because in the late second century "the usual Christian practice was to compose epitaphs which gave nothing away." So an "anchor was a tactful accompaniment to a neutral epitaph: specific enough to those in the know, while not as accessible to non-Christian recognition as, for example, the fish."[135] Despite the neutrality, this seems to be a nice example of a Christian from the imperial household during the Antonine or Severan period who was even interred in a catacomb.

However, what appears to be a foolproof case is actually a methodological blooper. Although both Diehl and McKechnie note that the inscription is fragmentary, neither makes much of it. The a priori assumption–an aggregate of the Christian context (catacomb) and content (anchor)–is that the inscription is Christian. As comparanda for this Sozon inscirption McKechnie then cites other 'Christian inscriptions' including one from the Cemetery of Hermes at Rome decorated with a fish and an anchor dated to 234 (*ILCV* 2807), and another from a *loculus* beneath St. Sebastian basilica with an anchor to

[134] McKechnie 1999: 430, n.10.
[135] McKechnie 1999: 433.

the left and a fish to the right (*ICUR* 5.1289). Not incidentally, this latter inscription is dedicated to one Atimetus, a house-born slave of the emperor. We will return to this shortly.

But as Marucchi originally detailed, two of the missing words in the Sozon inscription can be reconstructed since traces of letters from the preceding line are also visible (Figure 14).[136] So the text should read:

> [incomparabili et] Aur(elius) Sozon, Augg. lib(ertus), cognatus, bene merenti posuerunt.
>
> [For x who is in comparable and]/---[M(arcus)] Aurelius Sozon, freedman of the Emperors, his kinsman, have set up (this stone) for the well-deserving.[137]

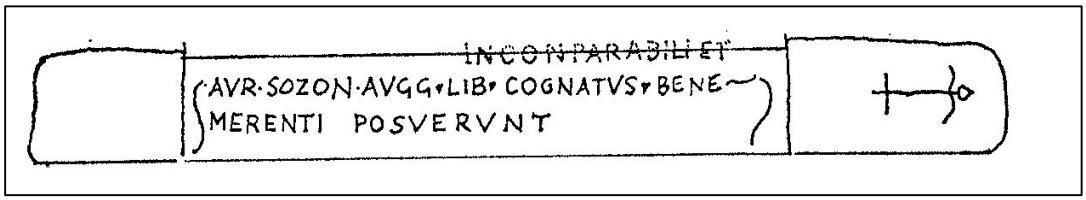

Figure 14: Epitaph for Unkonwn Person with Imperial Freedman Aurelius Sozon as Dedicator. Reused in Priscilla Catacomb (*ICUR* 9.25009).

The missing words are "*incomparabili et*." What this means is that Sozon is a *commemorator*. Sozon and someone else in his kinship network have set up (pl. *posuerunt*) an inscription for their well-deserving kin. This is not Sozon's epitaph. Equally important, this is the last part of the inscription that had broken off or was cut off

[136] Marucchi 1902: 227.
[137] *ICUR* 9.25009 = *ILCV* I.763a = *AE* 1903, 176.

and later then reused to cover the *loculus* of another person interred in catacomb. The person buried here was someone else entirely–whether Christian or not–and not Sozon himself and not even the person whom Sozon originally commemorated. The editors of the inscription in *ICUR* volume 9 state plainly that this stone had been reused.[138] In a surprising twist of scholarship it is only the most recent treatment of this inscription that has not voiced serious doubts about its Christian character.[139]

While the *loculus* does not belong to a Christian imperial freedman named Aurelius Sozon, the monument is instructive in other respects. At the time of the interment, the anchor on the right was either etched in the mortar or harvested as part of Sozon's original inscription, because it was understood as a specifically Christian symbol. But here the symbol's discrete resonance belongs to the fourth century or later, since Gallery H–a "fish-bone" pattern at the lower level of the Priscilla complex–only began in the fourth century.[140] Moreover, the reuse is significant for understanding burial practices. When Marucchi discusses the reuse of the Sozon inscription in the *loculus* he says that there were about ten other similar examples from that gallery. He cites, in particular, a tile that enclosed a *loculus* but which had the name Fundanos written on the *inside* of the panel, that is, on the side closest to the remains and thus hidden from

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[138] So does Marucchi 1902: 227.

[139] This begins with Marucchi's initial publication in1902. Even Diehl has some misgivings, punctuating a note with an all-too rare question mark (*num christianus est titulus ?*). Instinsky includes the Sozon inscription as belonging to the same era as Callidromus, but questions whether the find spot and the anchor symbol is enough to secure the inscription as Christian (1964: 121). Similarly, Boulvert 1974: 103, n. 622.

[140] Fiocchi Nicolai 2002: 29, and plan of lower level on p.25; see also Tolotti 1970: 322-340; Styger 1933: 132-33.

view.[141] Often times the *loculus* tile was painted over, anyway.[142] But these examples suggests that the *fossor*, family, or friend who reused the Sozon marble may have cared more about the ritual act of burial with an accompanying symbol anchoring the posthumous identity, than about the text or the name on the marble.[143]

Atimetus

The epitaph for the imperial slave named Atimetus is also a closure slab for a *loculus*. It is located on the southwest wall of the so-called '*piazzola*' beneath the basilica of *San Sebastiano fuori le mura* (*ad catacumbas*). The epitaph is carved on a poorly cut marble block (55 x 29cm) and reads:

> Atimetus, house-born slave of the Emperor, lived eight years three months. Earinus and Potens (made this) for their son.[144]

An anchor is inscribed on the left side of the block, and a fish on the right. The block is also framed by what seems be a continuous fresco on three sides. On the left panel, the image shows trees, deer, a donkey ridden by a person who seems to hold a baby in her arms, a large tree with red fruits, and two nude persons under the tree. On the right is a naked person, an arch, a nude man, an arch with a scale above, and another nude character (See Figure 15). The dedicators of the epitaph Earinus and Potens provide no

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[141] The tile was in two parts (29 x 58 cm) and painted in a reddish color (*ICUR* 9.25215).
[142] Mazzoleni 2002b: 150, and examples on 149 (fig. 155), 155 (fig. 159) and 156 (fig. 160, 161).
[143] As Mark Edwards writes: "the promise of sepulture may have counted more than the hope of a life to come" (Edwards 2007: 406).
[144] Atimetus Aug(usti) vern(a) / vixit annis VIII / mensibus III / Earinus et Potens / filio (*ICUR* 5.12892).

indication of their status or position in the slave system. They do, however, identify their son as a *verna*, and thus part of a particular group of slaves in the emperor's extensive *familia*. Because Atimetus was born enslaved both of his parents may have also been imperial slaves, but certainly his mother Potens was an imperial slave at the time of Atimetus' birth. In either case, Earinus and Potens were not legally married. The couple had enough resources or ingenuity to secure a decent size marble for the epitaph, as well as enough to commission the painting–assuming it is contemporaneous and consecutive.[145]

[145] Tortorella says that the stone is framed and almost sealed (*quasi sigillata*) by a certain fresco contemporaneous to the inscription (2011: 1362). Dölger, however, describes the stone as a subsequent (nachträgliche) attachment into the ancient wall painting (1943: 703). He does not explain the chronology beyond this statement, but the monument needs further and detailed study. For example, in modern photos, the left side of the marble has mortar joining it to the tufa on which the painting was executed (see Ferrua 1990: 15, fig.2). But in the earliest photograph I have been able to find (Styger 1935, Tafel 32b) there are hardly any traces of mortar around the marble (also Carcopino 1956: tab. XX). Moreover, in Styger's photo there appears to be a deep, rectangular incision in the tufa where it was cut to install the Atimetus epitaph, while in Ferrua's photo the incision appears to be filled in and/ or smoothed over. The cut of the stone is also awkward enough to deserves further analysis. There is ample space on the bottom and on the left, where the anchor is, but crowding at the top. The top right of the marble is so crowded in fact that the last stroke of the letter N in the word VERN is cut off.

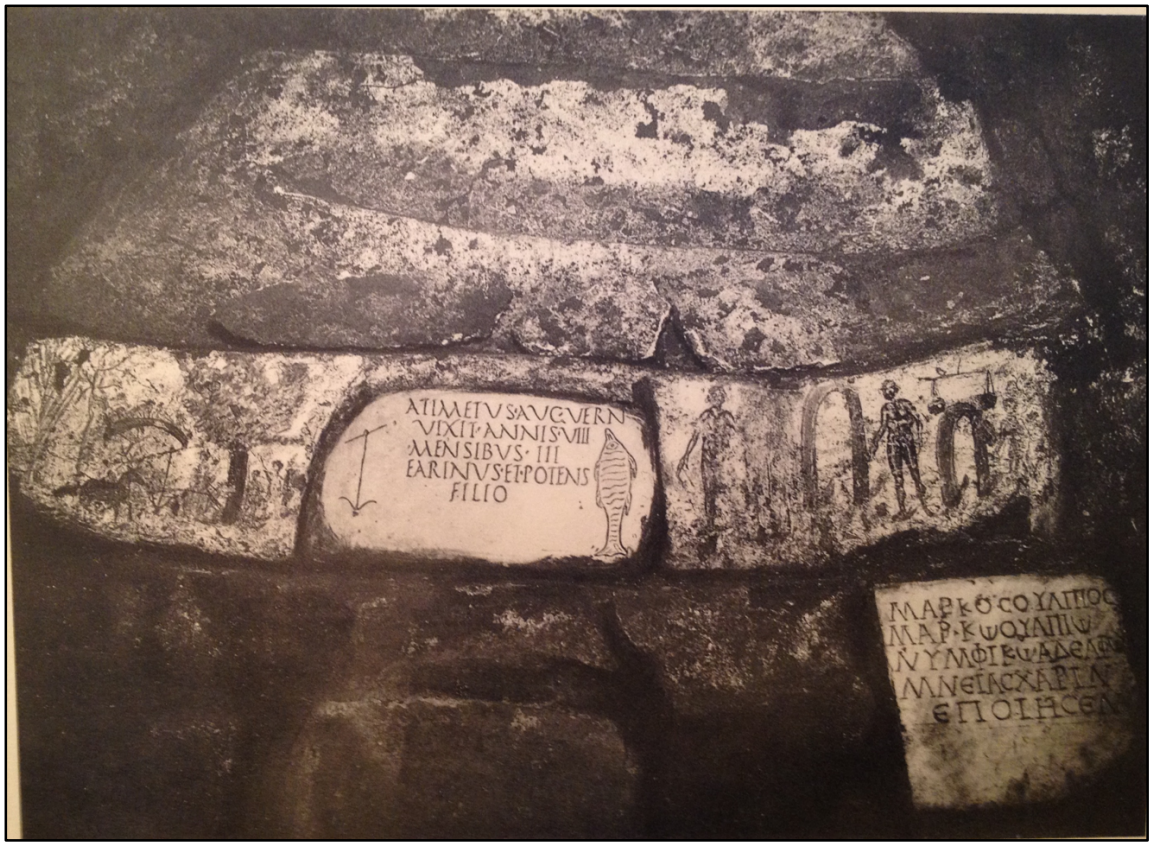

Figure 15: Epitaph for Atimetus, an Imperial Slave, with Surrounding Fresco. From the southwest wall of the '*piazzola*' beneath *San Sebastiano fuori le mura*.

A firm dating for the monument has been elusive. Most have placed it between the end of the second and first few decades of the third century. More recently a date at the end of the Severan period has been proposed (212-234 CE). This date is based on a comparison with the other epitaphs in this 'corpus'–that of Aurelius Sozon, which has an anchor, Aurelius Primus, which I treat below, and another epitaph from the Cemetery of

Hermes dated to 234 CE that is decorated with a fish and an anchor.[146] We shall return to this below.

For many interpreters the Atimetus epitaph is clearly Christian, or most likely Christian because of the two symbols.[147] But since its discovery in the early nineteenth century, the epitaph has never garnered a unanimous opinion. Others have suggested it was more likely a "pagan" grave.[148] Still others, notably Anthony Ferrua and F.J. Dölger, have cautiously withheld judgment, noting the difficulty of deciding between pagan or Christian.[149] Likewise the fresco, and its relation to the epitaph, has been subjected to various and divergent interpretations: some see Christian imagery where others see Roman tropes. The lack of consensus reflects the complexity not only of the Atimetus piece, but of the immensely complicated archaeological context in which it rests.[150]

The area known as the *piazzola* has been described as a "mixed" environment[151] that was never an exclusively Christian burial setting.[152] Even those who can somehow tally no less than twenty epitaphs of Christian commission here admit that "individual

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[146] McKechnie 1999: 430, n.10 and 436, 437. *ILCV* 2807.
[147] Spera 2003: 26; McKechnie 1999: 433-438; Carcopino 1956: 353. Also advanced with caution by Solin 2004: 218-19.
[148] Styger 1935: 15; less stringent is Finney 1994: 235.
[149] Ferrua 1971: 4; Dölger 1943: 703.
[150] For a helpful summary of the excavation history beneath the San Sebastiano basilica see Ferrua 1990: 7-10.
[151] Tortella 2011: 1362.
[152] Carletti thought the property changed owners, which would allow a Christian family or a group of Christian families to use the area for burial (1981: 304). But even during the first half of the third century there is no evidence for exclusive use by Christians (Borg 2013: 253).

tombs of Christians were inserted into the pagan cemetery,"[153] and that the hypogea were only later "Christianized."[154] Although many would now agree that there was some Christian presence in the area,[155] the debate is over which inscriptions should be deemed Christian, and how much of a Christian presence there was.[156]

But the usual fallback methods for distinguishing Christian from 'pagan' inscriptions–a single and secure topography, Christian names, typically Christian expressions–are not available here.[157] Several scholars have even argued that the only clear indication of a Christian presence in the area is a single graffito–an ΙΤΧΘΥΣ (*sic*) carved into the upper chamber of one of the second century tombs facing the *piazzola* (Tomb Y/ The *Innocentiores* Mausoleum).[158] There is nothing in the *piazzola* that can be reasonably classified as certain, Paul Finney asserts, and very little that falls even within the realm of probability.[159]

At first glance, the only items on the Atimetus inscription that can speak for "the Christianity of the monument" are the anchor and the fish.[160] Yet, we have already seen neither is an exclusive Christian symbol, and neither can prove anything about Atimetus'

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153 Fiocchi Nicolai 2002: 14. See also Fiocchi Nicolai 1997: 121; Carletti 1981: 287-307. Pergola 1998: 181-3.
154 Rutgers 2000: 127.
155 Styger 1933: 339 and 1935:41, and W.N. Schumacher 1977: 85-7 thought all the inscriptions were pagan.
156 For the various positions on the area see Mancini 1923: 48-50; Marucchi 1923: 96-8; Lietzmann 1927: 59; Dölger 1943: 697-704; Testini 1966: 55; Jastrzebowska 1981: 42-9; Brandenburg 1984: 30.
157 Solin 2004: 199.
158 Solin 2004: 199, 217; Finney 1994: 235. The date is unknown, but it must have been etched before the *piazzola* was completely filled in sometimes between 250 and 275 CE.
159 Finney 1994: 239.
160 Solin 2004: 219.

religious proclivities or his parents.'[161] The lack of a *Dis Manibus* is also unexceptional, though it is likely that the top portion of the plaque has been cut off.[162]

As for the surrounding painting,[163] the two most recent interpretations have taken opposite tacks. Stefano Tortorella argues that, without a doubt, the fresco represents the triumphal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem à la the gospel of Matthew.[164] This imagery, he relates, appears for the first time on Christian sarcophagi of the fourth century, and in paintings it seems to be unknown in the Christian repertoire prior to the first half of the fifth century.[165] For Tortorella the Atimetus painting is special precisely because it shows this imagery already in the first decades of the third century.[166]

The problem is that if Tortorella's interpretation is correct then the painting around Atimetus' epitaph would precede its comparanda by nearly two centuries.[167] This seems implausible to me. Either the dates for the epitaph and the painting are too early, or the interpretation of the painting is incorrect. The other problem is the circularity of the argument. The analysis of the fresco, Tortorella says, confirms the "clues" (*indizi*) offered by the inscription, and apparently demonstrates "with absolute certainty the

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[161] Solin rightly advises that the presence of numerous figures of the fish and anchor do not constitute an *a priori*, incontrovertible argument for the Christian character of the document (2004: 199).
[162] McKechnie 1999: 433.
[163] For the colored image see http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/781.
[164] Tortorella 2011: 1366.
[165] Tortorella 2011: 1366, 1367.
[166] Tortorella 2011: 1373.
[167] This does not seem to bother Tortorella. He goes on to say it is remarkable that an analogous phenomenon occurs in the pictorial decoration of the attic of the hypogea of Marcus Clodius Hermes: here the theme of the healing of the Gerasene demoniac, which Carlo Carletti situates well into the Christian community of the 2nd-3rd century, anticipates the next-oldest figurative documents of the 5th century (2011: 1373).

Christianity of the loculus."[168] But what are those clues that the painting confirms?–the fish and anchor. Tortorella presupposed that they were Christian symbols, which would mean Atimetus was a Christian, and that therefore the painting had to reflect Atimetus' religious affiliation.[169]

By contrast, Roberta Casagrande-Kim states that the epitaph is very generic, formulaic, and does not provide any information on the deceased's "credo"–fish and anchors were used throughout the *piazzola*.[170] Moreover, the alleged Christian iconography that Tortorella sees is completely absent from the scene on the right panel, and is tenuous at best on the left one.[171] Instead, Casagrande-Kim argues, the painting depicts Atimetus' movement through one region of Hades to the next:

> the first scene narrates the death and the beginning of the Atimetus' trip into Hades and, more specifically, his arrival at the Vestibule of Orcus. The inscription, set apart from the rest and visually functioning as the 'door' to the *loculus*, reminds the viewer of the boy's funeral and of the corporal component in death, while symbolically functioning as the crossing between Orcus to the left and the Plains, with the rest of the Underworld, to the right. In the third part of the story Atimetus passes through the various regions to reach Elysium, as it is suggested by the golden color of the portals. The first gate leads to Minos, who is raising his arm in a gesture that we have seen repeated both in the *Hypogeum of the Aurelii* and in the *Tomb of the Nasonii*. The scale behind him refers to his role as a judge…The second gate brings into [*sic*] Elysium, with another character expecting Atimetus to welcome him. The different scale of the characters would thus not refer to their age or status…but rather accentuate, together with the progressively reduced portals, the movement into space from an area closer to the viewer to further regions, that are depicted as smaller because recessed in space,

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[168] Tortorella 2011: 1373.
[169] Casagrande-Kim 2012: 176.
[170] Casagrande-Kim 2012: 176.
[171] Casagrande-Kim 2012: 177.

another convention commonly used in Roman art.[172]

The motifs in the painting around Atimetus' epitaph would thus echo other, contemporaneous paintings–e.g. from the Tomb of the Nasonii and the Hypogeum of the Aurelii–each depicting scenes of death and underworld journeys, but of a traditional (i.e. non-Christian) form.

Ultimately, we have very little grounds for claiming Atimetus was a Christian in the emperor's service. He was, after all, only a child of eight. Instead, the epitaph shows more concretely the activity of the parents, Earinus and Potens, and their commemorative response to the death of their child. The inscription presumably attests to their grief for and homage to Atimetus, but does not demonstrate "a covert declaration of the Christian faith," or indicate that they "belonged to circles that can be defined as Christian," as has been claimed.[173] Their commemorative discourse utilized images (i.e. fish and anchor) that *could* be interpreted by some as emblems of Christians. But whether Earinus and Potens intended to identify Atimetus, or themselves, as Christian we cannot say. Even if we could be certain that the couple wanted to evoke specifically Christian images these are still grounded in one particular monument for a particular audience in a particular moment, and not necessarily indicative of their everyday life.

[172] Casagrande-Kim 2012: 178-9.
[173] Spera 2003: 26; Solin 2004: 197.

One likelihood scholars have not considered, though, is that Atimetus' epitaph stone has been reused as a secondary *loculus* closure at a later date.[174] In this case, like the Sozon inscription above, the stone enclosed not Atimetus but someone else entirely. It is clear from the earliest available photograph (see above) that the Atimetus stone has been cut down. This explains why the letter "N" in the top right is diminished, why the fish's tailfin abuts the sheet's edge, why the stone is so roughly hewn, and why the spacing of the inscription as a whole is completely awkward. Whoever reused the inscription wanted to preserve primarily the anchor and fish symbols because at the time of the stone's reuse these images were functioning as distinctly Christian symbols. Consequently, the surrounding painting may not be an original for Atimetus. The date is, again, a key issue.

Studies of the *piazzola* have stated that beginning in the mid-third century the floor level was raised, probably as a result of excavating new galleries and grave-recesses within the restricted area.[175] By the last quarter of the third century the *piazzola* was apparently filled in completely (6m of earth) as construction of the so-called *Triclia* for Peter and Paul began above.[176] As a result, the wall in which the Atimetus epitaph is set shows two levels of *loculus* burials, one lower and one approximately two meters higher.

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[174] Hinted by Finney: the Atimetus inscription was "evidently introduced as a secondary feature into the center of a loculus" (1994: 232, 233, and fig. 6.5).

[175] Toynbee and Ward-Perkins 1958: 175 and n.61. Totorella (2011: 1359) also mentions the successive raising/elevation of the ground.

[176] This *Triclia* was an open courtyard with large colonnaded galleries intended for the cult of the apostles Peter and Paul. It became known as the *Memoria Apostolorum*. At the beginning of the fourth century, the whole area was apparently buried under the foundations of the basilica (Coarelli 2014: 383; Pergola 1998: 183).

The Atimetus inscription belongs to this upper level, and the *loculus* would thus belong to the later or last phase of the *piazzola*'s usage before it was buried.[177] According to the current phasing of the area this would be a range between 250 and 275 CE.

But it is likely that Christians of an even later era, at the beginning of the fourth-century after the *Tricilia* had been constructed, were still utilizing the *piazzola* space below. As far as I know, there is no evidence that the *piazzola* area was completely blocked off from the *Triclia* level. In fact, Francesco Tolotti's authoritative reconstruction shows a staircase descending from the *Triclia* level to the level below.[178] Thus, it seems more likely that fourth-century Christians were still transforming the space beneath the *Triclia* into a Christian cemetery at this later date and decorating it with material they considered to be Christian. This would include the fish and anchor images found on an imperial slave's epitaph. This later development would make better sense of Tortorella's interpretation of the surrounding painting as a Christian scene, explain why the Atimetus stone looks the way it does, and account for the other 'Christian' inscriptions in the *piazzola* that appear to be reused stones.[179]

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[177] Jastrzebowska 1981: 43.

[178] Tolotti 1953: 195, fig. 43.

[179] Other inscriptions from the area show similar suspicious characteristics: the Greek epitaph for Ancotia Irene by her husband Gaius Ancotius Epaphroditus, along with her sons Gaius Ancotius Rufus and Gaius Ancotius Rufinus (*ICUR* 5.12900). Here the fish is vertical on the left margin, stretching from line 2 to line 4. The anchor is on the right side, in lines two and three, but it covers parts of the N and O in the name ΡΟΥΦΕΙΝΟΣ. The fish and the anchor are roughly parallel. The lower band of the marble is embedded in the tufa. The right side of the text appears to run over into the band. See the last letters in lines 2 and 4. The stone was been broken in half (diagonally) and reassembled. It seals a *loculus*. Another example: the Latin epitaph for Ancotia Auxesis, by her parents Ancotius Epaphroditus and Ancotia Irene (*ICUR* 5.12891) has an anchor and fish horizontal at the top of the stone. But it is clear that the stone has been cut and embedded in the surrounding tufa: the letter "D" at the end of line three is diminished and the tailfin of the fish is also cut off. Image available at http://www.edb.uniba.it/epigraph/780

Viator

The inscription from the imperial slave Viator was originally seen and copied in the second half of the sixteenth century, and again in the first part of the seventeenth century, as it passed through the hands of prominent antiquities dealers in Rome (*CIL* 6.9077).[180] The inscription was first dubbed a Christian inscription in Diehl's 1925 catalogue (*ILCV* I.348), soon after the stone had been rediscovered (Figure 16).[181] Although the original context is unknown, and the travertine marble (50cm x 80cm) is broken on the right and badly worn throughout, the text is still legible. It reads:

> For the eternal sleep (*somno aeternali*) of Lucretia Hilara, his dearest and incomparable wife, Viator, slave born in the household of our Emperor, assistant bookkeeper, made this on his own behalf and for his children Lucretia Alexandria, Purpurio, Viator and Lucretia Saturnina, and the freedpersons, and for their own posterity. The opposite colonnade and the plot with the memorial (*memoria*) are also part of this monument.[182]

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[180] Paulus Knibbius originally located the inscription in the home of Vincenzo Stampa, a prominent sixteenth century figure in the antiquities market in Rome. Later Pietro Stefanoni (1557-1642) a Venetian antiquarian and collector in Rome records the piece as being from the home of Carlo Cremona near *San Pietro in Vincoli* (St. Peter in Chains). The publication of the inscription as *CIL* 6.9077 is based on Knibbius' copy.

[181] The stone was rediscovered in 1917 in damaged condition during excavations for the foundation of two new buildings in Piazza della Colonna. See Cantarelli 1917: 220. Piazza Colonna is part of the seventh Augustan region of Rome, corresponding to the modern via del Corso (ancient Via Flaminia) running north from Piazza Venezia to Piazza del Popolo. It is also the ancient site of the *Ara Pacis* and the *Horologium* of the emperor Augustus, now know for the display of the the column of Marcus Aurelius. The stone was found about 6 meters below the street level with two other epitaphs, also travertine marble (*CIL* 6.27836). The hypothesis was that after the seventeenth century the land in which the inscription was found was essentially a landfill of various epigraphic material coming from various locations. For example, the Viator inscription was found in the same loose earth (*sterri*) as an inscription from the year 1650. There appears to be water damage on the stone, and this may because the landfill was also a sewage drain. For history of the discovery see Cantarelli 1917: 223-4 and Fornari 1917: 23.

[182] somno aeternali / Lucretiae Hilare, coiugi karis[simae] / et incomparabili, Viator Aug(usti) n(ostri) vern(a) / adiut(or) tabul(ariorum), fecit et sibi et Lucretiae / Alexandriae et Purpurioni et Viatori et / Lucretiae Saturninae filiis et libertis / libert(orum) poster(isque) eorum. item contra se porti / cus et ariola cum memoria ad hoc moni / mentum pertinent (*CIL* 6. 9077= *ILCV,* 348). Viator was an assistant bookkeeper, or assistant at the record office depending on how one restores and translates *adiut tabul*.

According to McKechnie the distinguishing features that identify the deceased and/ or the dedicators as Christian are comparatively slender, but the initial *somno aeternali* is pivotal. This phrase, argues McKechnie, might strike the passer-by, that ever-present implied reader of Latin epitaphs, as merely a euphemism for death. Only a Christian observer would recognise a reference to the expectation of bodily resurrection and the Last Judgement. Hilara's sleep, that is to say, is *aeternalis* in the sense of continuing through this *aetas,* but is implicitly to be followed by everlasting life in the age to come.[183]

Figure 16: Epitpah for Lucretia Hilara and *Titulus* for Family by Viator, Imperial Slave. From Rome.

[183] McKechnie 1999: 432.

This over-interpretation robs the inscription of its historical and cultural context, however. Rather than a furtive reference to bodily resurrection and Christian belief the *somno aeternali* phrase falls within a range of similar motifs on family tombs, especially of imperial personnel, that provide burial space for freedpersons, their posterity, and other slaves who will be manumitted.[184] As such, the eternal sleep formula appears alongside dedications to the Divine Shades, and if anything "eternal sleep" denies the hope of resurrection. For example, on a similar inscription for an imperial freedman named Aelius Felix, wife Aelia Egloge, and their two children the dedication reads [*D(is)*] *M(anibus)* and then *Somno Aeternali* (Figure 17).[185] Besides *somno aeternali* analogous phrases include "a house of eternal rest," and "for perpetual sleep" (*domus aeternae quietae somno perpetuo*), both of which are followed by a commemoration to the Divine Shades.[186] In many other cases the phrase occurs without the *Dis Manibus*.[187] All this suggests that "eternal sleep," which introduces the *titulus* of the family tomb (*monimentus*), is simply another expression in commemorative discourse geared towards

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[184] *CIL* 6.11951, *CIL* 6.13073, *CIL* 6.16472, *CIL* 6.17430, *CIL* 6.17790, *CIL* 6.18378, *CIL* 6.18850, *CIL* 6, 21617, *CIL* 6. 29273a.

[185] [D(is)] M(anibus) / [so]mno (a)eternali / [A]elius Aug(usti) lib(ertus) Felix / [et] Aelia Egloge co(n)iux / [vi]bos se fecerun(t) et / [fil]i(i)s naturalibus / [Ael]io Stefano Aeliae / [Eut]ychiae (*CIL* 6. 10707a). The fragmentary text (56cm x 81.5cm) dates to the 2nd century CE, originally from Via Tiburtina, *Cimitero del Verano*.

[186] *AE* 1987, 130 (Vatican Necropolis). See also *CIL* 6.19966.

[187] *CIL* 6. 20446, *CIL* 6.21934, *CIL* 6. 27923, *AE* 2004, 225.

Figure 17: Epitaph for Aelius Felix, Imperial Freedman, and *Titulus* of Family Tomb by Aelia Felix, his Wife.

Memory (*memoria*). This term appears on Viator's dedication and on several other similar inscriptions,[188] and militates against identifying Viator and his family as categorically Christian. And without wild conjecture we cannot know based on a single common phrase what only a Christian observer would recognize.

Viator's family tomb is, however, the type we might expect an early Christian community in Rome to be using in the late second or early third century. Although Viator was an imperial slave and "an undifferentiated junior assistant"[189] in the administration,

[188] See *CIL* 6.18378, also *Malta* 2, 147.

[189] Weaver 1972: 240. An *adiutor* is what Weaver called a "junior clerical" position, below the "intermediate clerical" work such as a *dispensator* or an *arcarius* (Weaver 1972: 120, 231-240). The title

together with or because of his freeborn wife Hilara, they clearly had enough resources to secure a tomb complex. As the inscription indicates, the monument would have included a space for urns or interment, plus a colonnade (*portus*) and an *ariola* connected with the tomb. The *ariola*–a diminutive of *area*–was, most broadly, the building plot on which the tomb sat, but could also have been an interior courtyard.[190] The term *area* is significant because in his open apology to the proconsul Scapula, Tertullian says that the burial places of Christians were *areae*.[191] This suggests that groups of Christians both in Rome and Tertullian's North Africa used family tombs, not cemeteries in the modern sense. Viator's tomb-complex was also probably the type of "cemetery" that Zephyrinus supposedly owned and appointed Callistus to oversee.[192]

Aurelius Primus

The inscription recording the imperial freedman Aurelius Primus appears on an epitaph that he and his wife Cocceia Athenais commissioned for their daughter Aurelia Procope. The stone was discovered in 1842. It came "from the cemetery of Hermes" and was "in its place," according to de Rossi, but he gives no other specific information about its context.[193] The inscription reads:

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is a generic term that basically meant an assistant; it was used for a wide variety of posts in the civil and military administration.

[190] Given the opposite colonnade. The family tomb of the imperial freedman Secundus, whose *titulus* was later reused by Hercules, also had an *ariola* (*CIL* 6.13225). See above.

[191] *Scap*. 3.1.

[192] As Lampe asserts: "Every bit of real estate used by Christians was the possession of private individuals" (Lampe 2003: 27).

[193] Originally the stone was housed in the Kircherian Museum, then at Ripatransone, but is now in Cupra Montana at the Palazzo San Filippo Neri. Faßbender 2005: 134.

15 August. Aurelius Primus, freedman of the Emperor, bookkeeper, and Cocceia Athenais set up (this stone) for their daughter Aurelia Procope, who lived thirteen years, three months, fourteen days. Peace (be) with you.[194]

De Rossi identified the inscription as Christian because of the salutation "peace be with you" (*pax tecum*)–a phrase he says is of apostolic origin.[195] Besides the *pax tecum*, the date of Procope's death is inscribed on the top left (Figure 18).

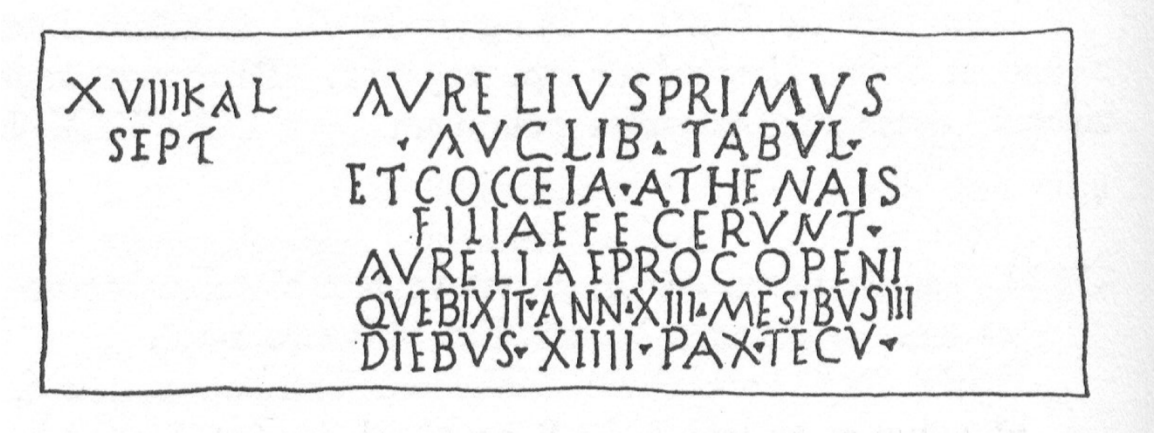

Figure 18: Epitaph for Aurelia Procope, Daughter of Aurelius Primus, Imperial Freedman. Drawing by De Rossi

[194] XVIII Kal(endas) / Sept(embres) //Aurelius Primus / Aug(usti) lib(ertus) tabul(arius) / et Cocceia Athenais / filiae fecerunt / Aureliae Procopeni / qu(a)e bixit ann(is) XIII me(n)sibus III / diebus XIII pax tecu(m) (*CIL* 6.9057=*CIL* 9.539,2=*ILCV* 00349=*ICUR* 10.27029).

[195] De Rossi 1873: 51. There is a mistake in the publication information on this inscription in *ICUR* 10.27029. De Rossi published the inscription in the 1873 volume of the *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* not in the 1875 volume. More broadly, de Rossi was trying to demonstrate the antiquity of the Hermes cemetery from the second century onwards, and he suggests, based on the wife's *gentilicum*, that this inscription belongs to the time of Nerva. De Rossi 1894: 16.

Because of these two characteristics the inscription has been frequently cited in discussion and handbooks of Christian epigraphy, and for most interpreters both the salutation and the date are a "sure sign" of a "Christian family."[196]

In this case I do think the two formulae–salutation and date–would evoke Christian epigraphic habits. All the epigraphic comparanda seem to point to this conclusion. There are two cautions, however. The first is dating. McKechnie wants the inscription to fit with his other Christian grave inscriptions from "the *familia Caesaris*" of the Severan period, so he assigns a range of 193-225, entertaining the possibility of a later date.[197] But for this inscription "dating is difficult," says Peter Lampe. "Emperors from Antoninus Pius (before his adoption in 138 CE) until Diocletian and Maxentius (307-312 CE) used the *gentilicium* 'Aurelius.'"[198] The Severan period thus feels a bit too early, and the comparanda in fact push the date of the inscription later. Other examples with the peace salutation are usually dated to the third century CE, that is, anywhere between 200 and 299 CE or later.[199] Some that record the date of death or *depositio* along with the *pax tecum* date even later.[200] The paleography of this inscription would also indicate a later date. The script is ornate, showing signs of cursive: the As have diagonal bars (an half-bars), the head strokes of the Ts are curved, the Ls have serifs, and the G

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[196] Instinsky 1964: 120; more recently, Faßbender 2005: 134.
[197] McKechnie 1999: 436, 439.
[198] Lampe 2003: 339. Moreover, the gens Aurelius is commonly associated with the edict of Caracalla (*Constitutio Antoniniana*) in 212 CE and continued in the names of fourth-century freedmen.
[199] *ICUR* 4.9388; *ICUR* 1.900; *ICUR* 9.25098; *ICUR* 9.25133; *ICUR* 8.23243; *ICUR* 9.25210; *ICUR* 9.25332; *ICUR* 9.25385.
[200] For example: deposso eius VI kal(endas)/ ianuar(ias) Florentinus/ qui oduit dolens animo/ fecit pax tecu(m) (*ICUR* I, 580=*ILCV*, 2248) dates to the 4th century. See also *ICUR* 9.25416 (290-325 CE) and *ICUR* 9.24461 (290-325 CE).

has a descending tail. Compare the epitaph of the imperial freedman Liberalis and his wife Sextia Flora from Ostia Antica (See Figure 19).

Figure 19: Epitaph for Liberalis, Imperial Freedman, by his Wife Sextia Flora. Ostia Antica.

Although more florid, and in a better hand, the reader will note the similarities in the letters A, G, L, T. This elongated and somewhat cursive style is more typical of the fourth

century or later.[201] So the epitaph for Aurelia Procope should be closer to the middle, or end of the third century. The father Primus was still alive at the time of his daughter's death. Thus, if Primus belongs in any way to the Severan dynasty, he may have been manumitted during the reign of Alexander Severus (222-235 CE).

The second issue is methodological. We have already encountered it: Interpreters have used this inscription's commemorative language to claim the dedicator(s) or dedicatee(s) as Christians. The ostensible Christian language could stem from Christians, certainly, but recalling the epigraphic bias, it is better to say that Primus and/or Athenais probably had some kind of connection to a group that employed a similar commemorative discourse. It might be Christian; it might not be. While it is reasonable to suggest it was a Christian group this is the limit of our knowledge. We do not know, for example, how strong a tie either Primus or Athenais had with a Christian group, what that group was like, what Primus' or Athenais' role was with that group, why–beyond remembering Procope's death–Primus or Athenais chose this particular funerary language, and what other socio-religious loyalties Primus had. For these reasons, moreover, we should be cautious about inferring how Primus' supposed "privileged" place in "the hierarchy of Roman society" reflects the status of "Christianity in Rome."[202] We can debate how privileged Primus may or may not have been as an imperial freedman

[201] Compare also the script in the last two lines of the Licinia Amias epitaph (*ICUR* 2.4246). See discussion above.
[202] McKechnie 1999: 441.

clerical worker–one of unnumbered others in Rome at the time. But we do not know that he, Athenais, or Procope were Christians.

Alexander and Marcus

In 1831, in the vineyard of the German Pontifical College on the northern edge of Rome Emiliano Sarti (1795-1849) found an inscription from a certain imperial slave named Alexander (Figure 20).[203]

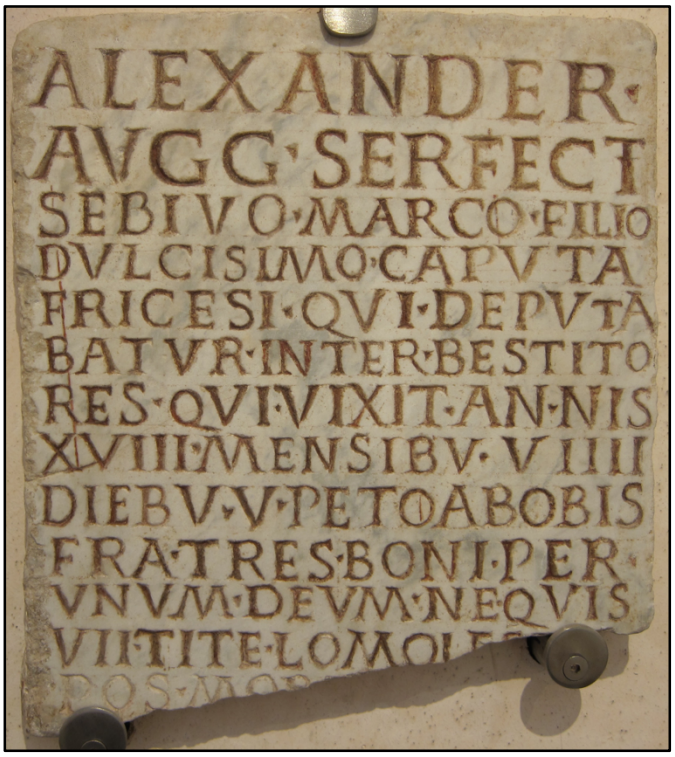

Figure 20: Epitaph for Marcus, Imperial Slave and *Caputafricesis* by his Father Alexander, Imperial Slave. From Rome. Author's Photo.

[203] The stone was then moved into the Kircherianum Museum in Rome, and is now in the Museo Nazionale Romano.

The Latin epitaph on white marble reads:

> Alexander, slave of the Emperors, set up (this stone) during his own lifetime for Marcus, his sweetest son, a *Caputafricensis*, who was assigned to the tailoring department, and who lived eighteen years, eight months and five days. I ask of you, good brothers, by the one god, that no one should damage this inscription after my death.[204]

The inscription entered the Kircherianum Museum shortly after and Pietro Ercole Visconti (1802-1880) produced the first extensive study of the inscription. He was also the first to identify the text as Christian. Two aspects led him to this conclusion. The first was the wider archaeological context of the find. The estate of the German College happed to coincide with the entrance to what is now known as the St. Hermes Catacombs on the Via Salaria Vetus. Although Sarti did not include exact details of his find, for Visconti it was "credible" that in another time the epitaph had also been there, that is *in* the catacombs.[205] Like the others at that time St. Hermes was assumed to be an exclusively Christian cemetery. The second aspect was the content of the text. The appeal to *fratres boni* ("good brothers") and the invocation *per unum deum* ("by one god"), says Visconti, were open confessions of Christianity by both imperial slaves Alexander and Marcus.[206]

Accordingly, the inscription entered the Christian epigraphic handbooks and catalogues, and since Visconti few have ever doubted that the father and son were

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[204] Alexander/ Augg. ser(vus) fecit/ se bivo Marco, filio/ dulcisimo, Caputa/fricesi, qui deputa/ batur inter bestito/ res, qui vixit annis/ XVIII, mensibu VIIII/ diebu V. peto a bobis/ fratres boni, per/ unum deum, ne quis/ (h)un(c) titelo moles[tet]/ pos mort[em meam] (*CIL* 6.8987= *ILCV* 2.3872= *ICUR* 10.27126). Dimensions H: 32.5cm, W:30cm, D: 3cm. Letter H: 2.7cm to 1.5cm).
[205] Visconti 1835: 42.
[206] Visconti 1835: 49-50.

Christians.[207] Scholars instead have pushed farther by, for instance, recording incorrectly that that the epitaph comes "*from*" or was "*in*" the catacomb of Saint Hermes;"[208] dubbing the brotherly language "characteristically" Christian;[209] assuming a Christian audience;[210] and describing the *unum deum* content as "*doctrinal* declaration"[211] with "monotheistic axioms" that were "explicit" so as to "make an ordinary pagan passerby pause a moment."[212] Moreover, because the "recognized Christian faith" of the father Alexander is taken for granted, he has also been used to identify another ostensibly Christian inscription–this one is from a certain imperial *freedman* named Septimius Alexander.[213]

The idea that Alexander and Marcus were Christians in imperial service has then made the social implications all the more seductive. Commentators have boasted that Marcus was a student at the *Caput Africae* on the Caelian Hill, where, it is thought, he

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[207] De Spirito 1999: 8 is an exception. Dal Covolo doubts a date in the Severan period (1989: 46).
[208] Green 2010: 201; Mazzoleni 2002: 16, but then adds "but probably from above ground." Dal Covolo 1989: 46. Italics mine.
[209] McKechnie 1999: 432. See e.g. Minucius Felix, *Oct*. 9.2.
[210] Noviello says "i confratelli nella fede cristiana" (2012a: 516); Clarke 1971: 122.
[211] Carletti 2008: 137. Italics mine.
[212] McKechnie 1999: 432-3. See also Noviello's more recent comments that the phrase constitutes "un ulteriore, espicito attestato di fede monoteistica per il padre *Alexander* a per il figlio *Marcus*" (2012a: 517).
[213] Ilardi suggests this Alexander may be identical to Marcus' father Alexander, but on this inscription Alexander has inscribed a monogrammatic cross representing the name of Christ. The inscription reads D(is) M(anibus) / Septimius Augg(ustorum) lib(ertus) / Alexander ex / procuratoribus / sibi vivo et Fulvi/ae Afrodite uxori / suae dulcissimae / ºX posuit (*CIL* 6.9028). Ilardi argued that what appears to be Greek letters chi and rho in asymmetrical position is more similar to a monogrammatic cross obliquely oriented with ornamental features than it is to an interpunct (Ilardi 1997: 223). For the image see Ilardi 1997, Fig. 3.2.5. Vatican Museum, GL 25,14, Inv. 7523. But the identification of the person and the cross is doubtful. Even if one interprets the shape in the last line as kind of monogrammatic cross representing the name of Christ–which seems unlikely to me–it is implausible that they are the same person: the inscription was found on the opposite side of Rome, the man here is an imperial freedman not a slave, includes an occupational description, mentions a wife, does not mention a son, and there are other known imperial personnel with the name Septimius Alexander (e.g. *CIL* 14.1595).

and the other young 'pages' of the imperial *familia* were in the lap of luxury being groomed for senior administrative posts, during which they could accrue wealth, property, slaves, enter the major social and governmental circles, and thus wield considerable *de facto* power. Marcus, it would seem, attests that already in the late Antonine or early Severan period Christians in Rome were moving into such educated, prosperous, and influential circles.[214]

The epigraphic content (*fratres boni per unum deum*) certainly raises the possibility that the *father* Alexander–we hear nothing from Marcus–uses a type of Christian commemorative language, and a further possibility that Alexander's piety practices included worship of Christ. There are other possibilities, however.

The brotherly language (*fratres boni*) that catches commentators' eyes is not exclusive to Christians.[215] It is well-known that such kinship terminology was common and significant in many group settings and Greco-Roman associations.[216] So another explanation is that the "good brothers" to whom Alexander was speaking were specific imperial slaves from Marcus' school. There are two reasons for this interpretation. First, Alexander used a distinctive group moniker for Marcus (*Caputafricesis*), which underscores Marcus' relationship with the others. It was like saying Marcus was a "West Pointer" or "Cambridgeman," as S. L. Mohler once put it.[217] Second, imperial slaves at

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[214] Clarke 1971: 122-3. Based on the imperial nomenclature, particularly the dual *Augg*., a date range would be 179-211 CE. The text is usually dated to the early third century. For recent discussion see Carletti 2008: 137-8.
[215] As McKechnie rightly notes 1999: 432.
[216] See discussion in Harland 2005.
[217] Mohler 1940: 273.

the *Caput Africae* seem to have formed clubs, groups, or associations,[218] and were likely expected to care for their dead like other *collegia*. Alexander thus presupposed that fellow imperial slaves, or others in the *paedagogium*, would come to commemorate Marcus with the standard rituals, and protect his tomb (as the term *titelus* indicates).

The inscription's "monotheistic" content–if we can call it that–is conspicuous to be sure, but even this is not exclusive to Christians.[219] Particularly during the Severan period, as many scholars have observed, "monotheism" was the *Zeitgeist*, and common to all groups was the idea that the emperor bore responsibility for the well-being of his empire, which could only be guaranteed by the support of the gods.[220] During this time the cult of *Sol Invictus* came into its own, for example, producing a universal solar monotheism embracing all other deities, and enabling divine power to be focused on the emperor.[221] The problem with the conventional interpretations of Marcus' epitaph is that the closest comparanda for a Christian inscription using *unum deum* dates to the first half of the fourth century–well over a century after Marcus.[222] But in early third century, the period to which the inscription is most often dated, we cannot be sure, based only on the

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[218] One inscription from the Hadrianic period (117-138 CE) records that Anthus, an imperial slave (*Caesaris*) was a *curator* for the boys at the *Caput Africae*. Anthus could have thus been the oversee, or sponsor, for an association/ *collegium* of imperial slaves. D(is) M(anibus) / Anthi Caes(aris) n(ostri) / curatori / puerorum / a caput / Africae Magna / ancilla eius / b(ene) m(erenti) fec(it) (NSA 1939, 86). For uses of *curator* in this sense see especially *CIL* 6.3713, *CIL* 6.9004, and *CIL* 6.30983 all of which include imperial personnel in a *collegium*.

[219] Leppin 2007: 97; more broadly van Nuffelen 2010: 16-33.

[220] Leppin 2007: 97. Grant 1996: 74

[221] Brent 1999: 266.

[222] The epitaph uses "qui in unu(m) deu(m) and includes a Christogram (*CIL* 6.18080=*ICUR* 3.8808).

rare phrase *per unum deum*, that Alexander was referring to Christ, YHWH, or some other combination of divine personas.[223]

It seems equally plausible, then, that the one god through whom Alexander entreats the brothers is the emperor himself.[224] After all, slaves swore by their master's *Genius*.[225] More broadly, the emperor's slaves and freedmen would have been expected to worship him, his *Genius*, his *numen*, his *Lares*, etc. just as any *paterfamilias* was worshipped in the household cult by his slaves and freedmen.[226] Sometimes the nomenclature attests to this when, for example, freedpersons identify themselves as freedmen or freedwomen of the *divine* emperor (*divi Augusti libertus/ liberta*; Gr. θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ἀπελεύθερος/ ἀπελεύθερα).[227] So at the *paedagogium* there were surely rituals for various deities, including the emperors–if not oaths to him–which Marcus would be expected to perform. This means even if his father would call himself a Christian–which

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[223] As to monotheism, it came to be increasingly felt that there was one god, who might as well be called Jupiter, and that the other Olympians were, as one could say, manifestations of that single deity (Grant 1996: 74).

[224] Under the temple of the divine Claudius, which was on the Caelian Hill in the *vicus Capitis Africae* where the eponymous *paedagogium* was located, there was a *collegium* "of the masters' divine power" (collegi(i) numinis dominorum). Its second century founder was an imperial freedman named Titus Flavius Trophimus (*CIL* 6.10251*a*).

[225] Gradel 2002: 163.

[226] See discussion in Gradel 2002: 42-44, 141, and on *numen* see 234-50. For example: Genio / familiae monetal(is) / Demetrius Caesaris n(ostri) / ser(vus) Epaphroditianus disp(ensator) / d(onum) d(edit) (*CIL* 6.239 = *ILS* 1633). Similarly, from Ostia: Numini / domus / Augusti / Victor et / Hedistus / vern(ae) disp(ensatores) / cum / Traiano / Aug(usti) lib(erto) / a(nni) X m(agistr)o (*CIL* 14.4319). There is also the cult of the images of the emperors, of which imperial personnel were involved. For example, Onesimus Aug(usti) lib(ertus) / proc(urator) / fecit imaginibus et / Laribus cultoribus / Fucini (*CIL* 9.3887); Neroni Caesari Aug(usto) / et Sancto Silvano / aediculam cum imagine / Fausius Caesaris/ d(e) s(uo) f[ecit] (*CIL* 6.927).

[227] See e.g. *AE* 1984, 951; *CIL* 11.3805; *CIL* 6.29681.

we don't know–Marcus may not have been a devotee only of Christ. Life as an emperor's slave at the *paedagogium* may not have allowed it.

The extent to which Marcus is a fair gauge for the social, political, or economic ascent of Christians in Rome also deserves a second look. First, and most obvious, Marcus died enslaved at the young age of eighteen. Whatever promise he had, whatever upward track he was on, whatever influence he might have wielded for other Christians died with him. Second, there is surprisingly little evidence that the *paedagogium Caput Africae* was an idyllic launching pad for brilliant careers.[228] The sources that mention the place reveal almost nothing about the path or training of the students or "graduates."[229] The epitaph for Marcus is the exception. Almost all evidence for the *paedagogium* consists of the epitaphs of the imperial personnel who worked there. They were not provincial procurators or imperial administrators, but imperial freedmen and house-born slaves who were "trainers of boys."[230] Of course, some of the imperial slaves who were

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[228] Weaver 1972: 121; 1967: 6; Finn 1987: 32.

[229] Clarke 1971: 122 uses this term. Inscriptions of other imperial personnel from the other imperial *paedagogium* on the Palatine Hill show a similar lack of information. See *CIL* 6.4353, 8965, 8966, 8967. Ironically, Mohler says there is "never a word as to the training given these boys who were destined to become managers of huge estates or agents of the imperial treasury" (1940: 269).

[230] Epigraphy from the Trajanic or Hadrianic period first records imperial slaves and freedmen who identify themselves as *paedagogi puerorum a Capite Africae*. See *CIL* 6.8972, 7767, 8982-8986, *NSA* 1939, 86. And from the early Severan period (198 CE) an inscription lists the teachers (*paedagogi*) of the boys at the *Caput Africae*–all of whom are imperial freedman, six born enslaved (*CIL* 6.1052). No other status indication is included. Another inscription mentions an anointer (*unctor*) who worked there and who commemorated a certain Philagrypus, died at 22, recorded only as a house-born slave from the *Caput Africae* (*CIL* 5.1039). A certain Aelia Cervola was a manicurist (*ornatrix*) of "Caesar's boys" (*puerorum Caesaris*), but it is not clear if she worked at the *paedagogium* on the Caelian (*CIL* 6.8977). Similarly, see *CIL* 6.8981.

trained there could have gone on to important or lucrative positions, but that doesn't mean there was an expectation or equal opportunity for all.[231] Favoritism played a part.

There was a catch, too. Life at the *paedagogium* had a sinister side. "Caesar's boys," as they were sometimes called,[232] could be *delicati* or *delictissimi*–sexual objects of the emperors and probably their teachers as well. This is why a *paedagogium*'s "luxury" included an anointer (*unctor*),[233] and a beautician (*ornatrix*),[234] and why the sources say boys from a *paedagogium* (*paedagogiani*) were well-dressed, careful of their complexions, and had elaborate hairstyles (*capillati*).[235] Recent work on graffiti from the other imperial *paedagogium* in Rome on the Palatine hill, from where the famous Alexamenos graffito comes, gives a stark picture of the sexual atmosphere at an 'imperial training school' and the kinds of experiences or 'training' that advancement might incur.[236]

Third, both Marcus and his father Alexander were slaves. And in the grand scheme of the slavery system Marcus' labor function was purely domestic. The idea that

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[231] Mohler 1940: 264 cites the case of Palaemon from Suetonius, *Gramm*. 23, but not as an example of a student from the *paedagogium Caput Africae*. The *paedagogia* were also only for primary education, between ages twelve and nineteen, with training including other tasks such as waiting at table and attendance upon the master (Maurice 2013: 122-3).

[232] "Caesar's boys" (*puerorum Caesaris*) on the Palatine (*CIL* 6.8977).

[233] Heliodorus unctor ad kaput Africaes (*CIL* 5.1039).

[234] Aelia Cervola Aug(usti) lib(erta) ornatrix (*CIL* 6.8977). Note Cervola is an imperial freedwoman and wife of an imperial freedman who also worked there.

[235] Mohler 1940: 268. Seneca *Vit. beat*. 17.2; *Tranq*. 1.8; *Ep*. 123.7 and 95.24; Martial III.58.30. See more recent discussion in Maurice 2013: 122-26.

[236] See Keegan 2013. Alexamenos has been included in the list of Christians in the '*familia Caesaris*.' The graffito (c. 200 CE) with an ass-headed figure affixed to a cross and that mocks Alexamenos–"Alexamenos worships his god"– apparently "shows how even in the imperial court…a Christian had 'problems' because of his faith" (Lampe 2003: 338, 351, n.1). But for other interpretations of the graffito see the discussion in Yarbrough 2012.

"he might have had the potential to rise to be an emperor's personal tailor" sounds like wishful thinking.[237] Marcus could perhaps have done well for himself later by, for example, entering the textile trade, or opening a shop. He may also have received more advanced training or education in another area, and gone on to work in another industry. But for all we know, based on the typical epigraphic idealizations, at the time of his death Marcus may have been more of a seamstress than anything else. Within the confines of the system he was closer to unskilled labor, lacking the training and pedigree necessary for administration and lasting power in the bureaucracy. The father Alexander, for his part, was still a slave at an age old enough to have an eighteen year old son. He must have been over thirty and past the age at which–according to accepted thinking– manumission was expected. Alexander also gives no indication of his position beyond being a slave. He may have been a factotum, though he clearly had enough assets to secure a tomb space with a moderately sized epitaph (32.5cm x 30cm) for his son. Thus, contextualizing the inscription and the lives of Alexander and Marcus should at least complicate the traditional arguments and any blanket assertions that these two exemplify Christians on the rise.

Marcus Aurelius Prosenes

The size and glamour of Prosenes's sarcophagus, along with its compelling inscription detailing Prosenes' rise from an imperial slave to the emperor Caracalla's household

[237] McKechnie (1999: 438).

manager (*a cubiculo*), have made it one of the most cherished 'Christian' artifacts from antiquity. Nothing about the style and decoration of the sarcophagus suggests anything but standard Roman imagery (Figure 21).[238] And nothing could indicate any Christian content except for Ampelius' expression "*receptus ad deum*" inscribed on the right side above the griffin (Figure 22).[239] Despite the rest of the monument–including the reference to the divine Commodus–according to traditional accounts this additional piece "tips the scales in favor" of Christianity,[240] and supposedly illustrates the principle of Christians hiding behind "plainly pagan, or at least neutral" epitaphs.[241] Ampelius left an "undeniable hint" that Prosenes had had been a Christian.[242] Because the "usual Christian practice" was to give "nothing away," this was a "veiled profession of Christian allegiance,"[243] an "almost hidden Christian confession of faith."[244] The existence of other Christian grave inscriptions from imperial personnel of this same epoch, some have argued, could also corroborate "Prosenes' Christianity."[245] But as Hans Instinky said, "it is no longer disputed that Prosenes died as a Christian."[246] Indeed, it is normally

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[238] For descriptions of the monument from art-historical perspectives see Thomas 2012 and Deichmann 1967: 387.
[239] Carletti 2008: 131. Kolb and Fugmann 2008: 110. McKechnie 2001: 143.
[240] Mazzoleni 2002a: 15. Also Lampe: "Indications that speak for a non-Christian interpretation of Prosenes's sarcophagus… carry less weight than the fourfold evidence *for* Christianity" (2003: 333). Timothy Barnes calls it "a fine Christian sarcophagus" (2010: 50), and Deichmann includes it in his catalogue of Christian sarcophagi (1967: no. 929).
[241] Lampe 2003: 332, n.6; Rutgers 2000: 87; and McKechnie 1999: 433 all use the term 'neutral.'
[242] Instinksy 1964: 114. Also Kolb and Fugmann 2008: 110.
[243] Lee 2015: 40
[244] Lampe 2003: 333.
[245] Kolb and Fugmann 2008: 110. Dio Cassius 73.4.6-7.
[246] Instinsky 1964: 120.

presumed that this powerful high court official–and his freedman Ampelius, of course–was a Christian.[247]

Figure 21: Sarcophagus monument of the Imperial Freedman Marcus Aurelius Prosenes. Front View. From Rome.

[247] Thomas 2012: 138; Green 2010: 115; Mazza 2006: 16; Grant 2004: 175; McKechnie 2001: 143; Beard, North, and Price 1998: 2.335.

Figure 22: Secondary Inscription of Ampelius, Freedman of Prosenes showing "*receptus ad deum*." Upper right band of Sarcophagus. Author's Photo.

This has invited several scholars to construct a sort of Christian biography for Prosenes. Some talk about Prosenes' "conversion" to Christianity or "entrance into the Christian catechumenate" and how his position as oversee of gladiatorial games kindled the Church Order (*Traditio Apostolica*) against such activity.[248] Others have seen Prosenes as a "respected figure" among the "Christian community" of imperial personnel and courtiers in Severan Rome.[249] Still others have entertained the idea that Marcia, the concubine of Commodus and, according to tradition, an ally of Christians,[250] helped

[248] Rutgers states that "Prosenes converted to Christianity" (2000: 86, 87); similarly McKechnie 1999: 434 and Lampe 2003: 332.
[249] 1999: 434.
[250] Hippolytus says she is a god-lover (φιλόθεος) according to (*Haer*. 9.7.10). See Dio Cassius, *hist*. *Rom*. 73.4.7= Xiphilinos, 11th century empitomator.

Prosenes advance in the administration.[251] Overall, because of his influential position and "personal relationship" with Caracalla, Prosenes seems a paragon of Christian social mobility[252] and a veritable statoscope for the socio-political rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire.[253]

Much of the commentary on Prosenes is entangled in assumptions and speculation, however. Details have been overlooked and socio-religious aspects neglected. So much relies on a single, and later epigraphic phrase added by Ampelius. This has not been lost on interpreters. Adolf von Harnack, for instance, concedes that "de Rossi is probably right," and then includes Prosenes in his ever-growing tally of Christians at court. But he promptly cautions that Prosenes' "Christianity" is "not certain."[254] It is simply an "inference from the words 'receptus ad deum'" and from "the lack of any pagan phrases," plus Harnack warns, "Prosenes himself did not use these words."[255] More recently the criticism has grown louder. As Borg notes, it is far from certain that this phrase (*receptus ad deum*) refers to the Christian god.[256] The formula cannot be constituted as a sure attribution because, as Carletti observes, in second and third century epigraphy "there are no shortage of pagan funerary attestations" that use

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[251] Kolb and Fugmann 2008: 110.
[252] Markschies 2012: 27-8; Mazza 2006: 16.
[253] Harnack 1908: 2.48-9; Frend 1984: 294-5; Kyrtatas 1987: 129;
[254] Harnack 1908: 2.48-9.
[255] Harnack 1908: 2.49, n.1.
[256] Borg 2013: 44, n.14. *Pace* Beard, North, and Price who say that Ampelius' inscription is "explicitly Christian in phrasing" (1998: 334).

deus–e.g. *dei manes receperunt*.[257] As we saw with the Alexander inscription, *deus* is not simply a code word for Christ.

Further, the occurrences of similar phrases deemed as positively "Christian locutions"–*receptus in pace*, *accepta ad deum*–do not appear before the fourth century, and most are even later.[258] This fact has led some scholars to fitful and circular explanations. Lampe, for example, recognizes that comparing Ampelius' inscription with the later Christian comparanda is "anachronistic, but it must remain," he says, "because there is hardly any comparable Christian material for comparison in this early period. In the area of recognizably Christian epigraphy, Christians are still newcomers."[259] But at the same time that scholars identify Ampelius' formula *receptus ad deum* as recognizably Christian, they also claim it is *clandestinely* Christian.[260] This methodological hedging only works because of the persecution narrative. Ampelius did "not dare publicly to display" Prosenes' Christianity because of Rome's "usual legal practice" that persecuted and martyred Christians "merely on the grounds of the *nomen christianum*."[261] So Ampelius etched the "veiled," "almost hidden" faith message on the upper right side, and an otherwise 'neutral' sarcophagus covered his tracks.

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[257] Carletti 2008: 132. C(aio) Sentio Sat(urnino) co(n)s(ule) / K(alendis) Sextilib(us) / Dei Manes / receperunt / Abulliam N(umeri) l(ibertam) / Nigellam (*CIL* 2.2255); see also *CIL* 6.9633; *CIL* 6.3055;; *CIL* 10.809.

[258] Carletti 2008: 131-32, also noted by Lampe 2003: 331. See *ICUR* 1.1426 (363 CE); *ICUR* 7.18496 (4th cent.); *ICUR* 2.4892= *CIL* 6.31977 (5th cent.); *ICUR* 2.4137 (late-4th to early-5th cent.). Instinksy also notes that the "formula" *receptus ad deum* is not especially frequent in early Christian inscriptions (1964: 120).

[259] 2003: 331.

[260] McKechnie's comment that "No-one was flaunting Prosenes' commitment, but it is explicit" (2001: 144) tries to slip out of this contradiction.

[261] Lampe 2003: 332, 334.

In my view all this is too wrapped up in a game of shadows: If Ampelius was at legal risk, why then would he explicitly identify himself by signing the inscription with his own name? If Christian imperial slaves and freedmen were protected from legalities, why is the monument still "neutral" and Ampelius' inscription "veiled," when Alexander's contemporaneous epitaph for Marcus is "explicit"? And if there was little risk, why was Ampelius not more explicit: *Prosenes Christianus*? And what real purpose would it serve Ampelius to identify (sort of) Prosenes as a Christian, anyway? Is that really what was going on? I don't think so. As we have already seen, the crux is Roman funerary customs and commemorative practices, over and above any furtive disclosures of religious affiliation. As always, we must explain Ampelius' actions in its broader cultural milieu.

According to Ampelius' add-on we know Prosenes had accompanied Caracalla on his Parthian campaign (216-217 CE). On the way back to Rome Prosenes died. If de Rossi's restoration is right, Prosenes passed at Same in Cephallenia.[262] (This is modern Sami, Cephalonia–the largest of the Ionian Islands). Thus, some of Prosenes' slaves and freedmen, perhaps including Ampelius, had also travelled in the expedition's entourage and were there when Prosenes died. This group was then responsible for composing his epitaph and adorning his sarcophagus. As part of this group Ampelius was equal in commemorating his patron, and recognizing "the divine Commodus" (*divo Commodo*) as the initiator of Prosenes' good fortune, and by extension his own. All this is very

[262] The portion of the sarcophagus where Ampelius chiseled has been damaged so name of the location where Prosenes died is defective.

common. Ampelius was acting like any Roman freedman would.

Compare the following examples. Marcus Ulpius Phaedimus was a freedman of Trajan. He too 'rose' through the slave system from a cupbearer (*a potione*), to *lictor* nearest the emperor, then to "keeper of privileges granted by the emperor" (*a commentariis beneficorium*)–a kind of right arm and one of Trajan's favorites.[263] Phaedimus even had his own slave, Valens, in charge of his clothes (*a veste*). Phaedimus accompanied Trajan on his long Mesopotamian campaign (113-17 CE). During the return in 117 CE just a few days after Trajan, Phaedimus died at Selinus in Cilicia. His now freedman Valens Phaedimianus–who managed to become an *imperial freedman*–then brought his remains back to Rome. However, Valens did not do so until 130 CE. We know this because he inscribed the details on the epitaph he erected for his patron Phaedimus in Rome.[264] Why there was an interval we do not know. But it is likely that Phaedimus had originally been buried in Selinus, and his ashes, rather than his bones, were returned to Rome.[265]

A similar thing happened to the imperial freedman Titus Aelius Titianus, guardian of the priestly archives, who had died at Carnuntum on the Danube sometime between 170-2 CE. His wife Flavia Ampelis got permission from the emperor, probably Marcus

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[263] Weaver 1972: 103, n.1; Millar 1977: 67-69. For other imperial freedman who "rose" from personal attendants of emperors to administrative services see *ILS* 1942-1944; *CIL* 6.8409.

[264] M(arco) Ulpio Aug(usti) lib(erto) Phaedimo / divi Traiani Aug(usti) a potione / item a laguna et tricliniarch(a) / lictori proximo et a comment(ariis) / beneficiorum vixit ann(os) XXVIII / abscessit Selinunte pri(die) Idus Augus(tas) / Nigro et Aproniano co(n)s(ulibus) / reliquiae treiectae eius / III Nonas Febr(uarias) ex permissu / collegii pontific(um) piaculo facto / Catullino et Apro co(n)s(ulibus) / dulcissimae memoriae eius / Valens Aug(usti) lib(ertus) Phaedimianus / a veste ben(e) mer(enti) fecit (*CIL* 6.1884).

[265] Carroll 2006: 166.

Aurelius who was there campaigning against the Macromanni, to return Titianus' remains (*reliquiae*) to Rome. When exactly she returned is not clear, but when she did she inscribed this information on her husband's urn.[266] On the other hand, sometimes only the bones (*ossa*) were returned home when a person died abroad, as was the case with a certain concubine named Herennia Lampas who died in Sardinia and was commemorated with an epitaph in Tivoli.[267]

These examples help tell the story. Prosenes may have 'returned' to Rome much later, not least since Cefalonia is well over a thousand kilometers away.[268] The selection of a sarcophagus by Ampelius and the others is not, as some have claimed, evidence that the freedmen sought a "Christian burial" for Prosenes, or further corroboration for Ampelius' profession of Prosenes' Christianity.[269] Retrieving remains, in whatever form, and carrying out a burial was kinship duty (*pietas*), and by the third century interment was increasingly popular.[270] We also cannot assume that Prosenes' flesh-eater actually had his flesh because "burial, not cremation, was cherished by the Christians."[271] Some

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[266] *CIL* 6.8878.
[267] *CIL* 14.3777.
[268] We cannot assume that Prosenes was immediately embalmed, and hence preserved, after death since embalmers were not present in every town (Carroll 2006: 164). Hundreds of miles separate Cephalonia and Rome. Rather than transport a quickly rotting corpse, someone may have either waited in Cephalonia for embalming; buried Prosenes there; or had no choice but to return Prosenes in a non-corporeal form.
[269] Lampe 2003: 332.
[270] See Bodel's comments vis-à-vis Christianity and the transformation across the empire from cremation to inhumation (2008: 181).
[271] Lampe 2003: 332 citing Minucius Felix (*Oct*. 34.10). This passage, however, shows the opposite. The author writes: "The whole body, whether it crumbles into dust, or is resolved into moisture, or reduced to ashes (*cinerem*!), or attenuated into smoke, is withdrawn from us, but the elements remain in the keeping (*custodia*) of god."

sarcophagi were used for cremation burials,[272] and people were not always buried at the place where they were commemorated. It was even possible to 'bury' an absent body in an imaginary funeral (*funus imaginarium*).[273]

Moreover, Ampelius' engraving was, in some sense, a pious act. But it was most likely occasioned by the rituals honoring his dead patron, not by a desire to profess Christian faith. In fact, the inscription may have appeared much later than the original installment of the sarcophagus monument. The most evident ritual occasion would be while a group of freedmen feasted with Prosenes on an anniversary of his death. Banquets at the graves of family and friends–i.e. meals with the dead–were standard among Romans and Roman Christians, and there were plenty of opportunities on the calendar (*dies Natalia*, *parentalia*, *rosalia*).[274] The figure of Prosenes reclining at banquet on a *kline* assumes this ritual world, and in this respect the monument is prepared to receive the offering of libations that commemorators would pour to fulfill their religious duties.[275] The cultural expectation is that Prosenes' freedmen and slaves would play a leading role in honoring him their patron in this way, especially since it seems he died with no other kin or agnate heirs.

More specifically, the impetus for Ampelius to add the inscription may have been his own manumission. Ampelius was once Prosenes' slave, and may have been manumitted upon the latter's death (*ex testamento*)–also a common practice. So Ampelius

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[272] Ewald 2015: 397, 399.
[273] Carroll 2006: 165, 166.
[274] See Jensen 2008: 117-20.
[275] See discussion in Ewald 2015: 397-8.

would add the inscription to toast his own manumission, his newfound status, and his patron's generosity. After all, he signs his inscription "Ampelius, his freedman."

Concomitantly, it is possible that Ampelius' phrase *receptus ad deum* originated in a Christian setting, or was meant to evoke a view of death that Christians in Rome could recognize. But whatever Christian meaning we can squeeze from Ampelius' 'formula,' that meaning would still reflect Ampelius and *his* vision, more than Prosenes.[276] Though I would not rule out the possibility that the phrase in some way could also relate to Prosenes' life, the impulse to describe this phenomenon as "Christianity" and "conversion" is insufficient. Saying that Prosenes was a Christian is uncertain and explains little. Christians are not all alike.[277] Saying that he "converted" is conjecture, and still needs explanation. There was more than one way to "make Christians" (ἐποίσεν Χριστιανούς),[278] and more than one way to display Christianness. Assuming Prosenes was devoted to Christ at all, there were multiple "category memberships" of religious affiliation, with various saliencies and intermittent hierarchies. We cannot assume that Prosenes' Christiannes was always activated, given priority or even significance, simply because it was available.[279]

This kind of fluidity must have been palatable for imperial personnel, no less for someone like Prosenes. In real terms, there were several ways in which he could

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[276] See Saller's first methodological point: "burials in all their ritual and material aspects were the creations of living social entities–whether they be familial…or patronal relationships…or *collegia*…or Christian communities" (2008: 5).
[277] Boin 2015: 5.
[278] *Acts of Justin* B.4.7.
[279] Rebillard 2015: 305.

participate in a Christian group or do things that others would see as *christianismos*. One could be patronage or hospitality: providing gifts or money to an association of Christ-worshippers, for example, or allowing such a group access to his vast estate and/or villa on the Via Labicana outside Rome.[280] And even the most hardline apologist of the period, Tertullian, the "puritan of Carthage"[281] allows for the terrific idea of "almost Christian" (*paene Christianus*). It is no coincidence that he applies this to a high-ranking political official, Claudius Lucius Herminianus, governor of Cappadocia.[282] Perhaps Prosenes, like Herminianus, died "almost Christian." Maybe Ampelius captures this in his lapidary phrase. Whatever the case may be, those who wish to measure Christianity's rise in the Roman Empire by focusing on the political, social, or economic clout of Prosenes must also accept that, for him, the meaning of Christian would be situated and variable.

The paradox for Prosenes and for other 'Christian' imperial slaves or freedpersons is the closer one got to the emperor, the more one's loyalties to Christ probably had to stretch and occasionally tear. At work, the theatre, the racetrack; in the arena, at the crossroads; during temple dedications, urban festivals, and oaths; and of course in the halls of the palace, through rituals and gestures, the emperor's slaves and freedpersons would have been expected to worship, reverence, or honor Roman gods, including the

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[280] It seems Prosenes owned a "vast" villa estate stretching from the 6th to the 8th mile of the Via Labicana, from roughly modern Torre Maura to Torrenova. During excavations of a villa in the area of Santa Maria (Torre Marua) in 1983, a water pipe (*fistula*) was discovered in a tank of peperino. The name stamped on the *fistula* was *Aurelius Prosenes*. See Tartara 1987/88: 412, and n.14. The rarity of the cognomen Prosenes, coupled with the proximity of the two finds–*fistula* and sarcophagus–makes the identification nearly certain. See Granino Cercere 2001: 192.

[281] The tag is Enslin's 1947.

[282] Tertullian, *Scap*. 3.

emperors themselves.[283] How Prosenes or any other imperial personnel navigated this world, I do not know, but the answers would certainly enliven how we understand Christians in the Roman Empire.

Carpophorus

One last piece needs attention before concluding. The person known as Carpophorus appears for the first and only time in the annals of Christian literature in the third century work called the *Refuation of All Heresies*, normally ascribed to Hippolytus of Rome. In this work the author describes his opponent Callistus as a domestic slave (οἰκέτης) of a certain Carpophorus. This Carpophorus, he says, was "a faithful man from Caesar's household" (ἀνδρὸς πιστοῦ ὄντος ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας). What follows is a well-known story, which at this point, I will spare the reader.

Those who trust the author's information as historical–more on this in the next chapter–often state that Carpophorus was an imperial freedman.[284] Accordingly, he has been joined with Prosenes. The two were "highly placed freedmen officials," it appears, representing the Christian community at the imperial court in the late second to early third century.[285] Carpophorus' status as a "rich imperial freedman," would also suggest that Roman Christians were now in a prominent economic position.[286] Because it is

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[283] See Boin 2015: 89-90.
[284] Fiensy 2014: 197; Borg 2013: 78, n.51; Wheatley 2011: 73; Green 2010: 98; Mazza 2006: 21, 26; Nathan 2000: 52; McKechnie 1999: 439; Andreau 1999: 67 and 1993: 189. Döllinger said he was a Christian and an official in the imperial palace (1876: 108).
[285] Mazza 2006: 16; Frend 2014 [1965]: 318.
[286] Mazza 2006: 26, 16, 27.

thought that Carpophorus was an imperial freedman, some have then marshaled an inscription from Rome that would authenticate the description of Carpophorus in the *Refutation of All Heresies*. The inscription reads:

> Marcus Aurelius Carpophorus, freedman of the emperors, made this for himself and for Aurelia Epictes his wife and for (their) children, and for Aurelius Paulinus his brother and for his children, and for Seleucus his foster son, and for his freedmen and their posterity, likewise for their freedmen and freedwomen after them. This monument or this garden-tomb of my name I disallow to be transferred to another.[287]

The idea is that this Marcus Aurelius Carpophorus could be identical to the Christian Carpophorus of third century Rome.[288]

The impression of Carpophorus that has built up over the years is possible, but I think unlikely–again, assuming the historicity of the *Refutation of All Heresies*. The author gives no other information about Carpophorus' status except that he was from "Caesar's household." The locution he uses (Καίσαρος οἰκία), on a strictly historical-cultural basis, more likely refers to imperial slaves. Though not for this reason, several scholars have in fact noted that Carpophorus could also have been a slave.[289] In this case, Lampe suggests, Callistus could have been an under-slave (*vicarius*) and Carpophorus his

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[287] M(arcus) Aurelius Augg(ustorum) lib(ertus) Carpophorus fecit / sibi et Aureliae Epictesi coniugi suae et / fili(i)s et Aurelio Paulino fratri suo et / fili(i)s eius et Seleuco alumno libertisq(ue) / et posteris eorum item libert(is) liberta/busque suis posterisque eorum / hoc m<o>n<u>mentum sive cepota<ph>ium / de nomine meo alienari veto (*CIL* 6.13040). Original provenance is unknown. According to the editors of the entry in *CIL* 6, the inscription was in the possession of Baldwin Briello (*Balduino de Briele*), an antique dealer living at Santa Maria ai Monti.

[288] Lampe 2003: 335; Gülzow 1967: 105 and n. 15. Similarly, McKechnie 1999: 427, n.1; Harnack 1908: 2.47.

[289] Lampe 2003: 335, 13; Güzlow 1967: 105, and n.15.

over-slave (*ordinarius*)–plausible enough. But matching this hypothesis with the unclear legal situation in the *Refutation*'s account still poses problems.[290]

It is also possible that the Carpophorus from the *Refutation* was an imperial slave who owned a slave(s), but was later manumitted and became an imperial freedman. Yet, there is little chance that the person in the inscription is the same as the character in the *Refutation*. The name Carpophorus, meaning fruit-bearer, is used for many slaves and freedmen in the imperial period.[291] It appears also for an imperial slave in Rome. The epitaph is for Carpophorus and Satyriscus who are *Caesaris nostri servi*–note the '*Caesaris*' is linked with slaves.[292] The name is also used for other imperial freedmen of the second century.[293] Besides, Lampe reminds us, the burial inscription "contains no Christian evidence."[294]

Instead of trying to verify the story in the *Refutation* and smooth out the details, it is more important to recognize what this third-century Christian writer could reasonably imagine about Caesar's household. An imperially-owned (or formerly-owned) person was also a faithful one (πιστός). He had enough money to own a slave–who would be a more important figure for the community–and enough to try turning a profit (κέρδος)

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[290] Lampe 2003: 335, 13.
[291] From Comum: C(aius) Publicius / Carpophorus / VIvir et Aug(ustalis) (*CIL* 5. 5301); from Rome, an *Aulus Atinius libertus Carpophorus* (*CIL* 6.975); *Carpophorus lib(ertus)* and a Carpophorus *alumnus* (CIL 6. 3504); *Carpophorus libertus* (*CIL* 6.9915)
[292] D(is) M(anibus) / Carpophorus et / Satyriscus Cae(saris) / n(ostri) ser(vi) fecerunt / L(ucio) Cornelio Dioc(u)le / et Ulpiano / et Corneliae Euty/chiae / b(ene) m(erenti) (*CIL* 6.14416).
[293] From Rome, 2nd cent. CE: D(is) M(anibus) / P(ublio) Aelio Car/pophoro Aug(usti) / lib(erto) Lucceia / Flora con/iugi bene / merenti / fecit (*CIL* 6.10660). From Pergamum, 2nd cent. CE: Aesculapio// Carpophorus Aug(usti)/ lib(ertus) tabular(ius) pro/ vinc(iae) Asiae (*AvP* 8,3.107).
[294] Lampe 2003: 335, n.13.

through banking ventures (πραγματείας τραπεζιτικῆς).[295] Others in that Roman Christian community–widows and brothers–presumed to invest with that person from Caesar's household, whom they considered *prudent* (εὐλαβής).[296] In some sense, this scenario probably reflected a reality in Rome at the time.

But we cannot assume a "Carpophorus"–simply because he was from Caesar's household–was more influential for "Christianity in Rome" than his immediate impact as financial broker or patron for a specific segment of Christians. What's more, Carpophorus could have been counted as a "faithful one" precisely because of his trustworthy banking activity. There are a number of rich examples from second century Rome that show imperial personnel were leading members–indeed overseers (*curatores*)–of groups (*collegia*) devoted to particular gods (e.g. Aesculapius, Hygeia, Silvanus, and the emperor). The imperial slaves and freedmen in these instances could be devotees of the deity and participants in the group, but as overseers they were also some of the principle benefactors. They could help supply, furnish, or restore a meeting place; gift money or other little goodies in wicker-baskets (*sportulae*); provide burial for group members *and for outsiders* on their own property; and depending on the circumstances, perhaps impart some social or political cachet.[297] So in the lifeworld of the *Refutation*'s author, Carpophorus' faithfulness or devotion to Christ may have been counted *in the*

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[295] *Haer*. 9.7.1.
[296] *Haer*. 9.7.6.
[297] The best examples are *CIL* 6.10234 (153 CE); *CIL* 6.631, 632, and 6713 (177CE and later); and *CIL* 6.30983 (2nd cent. CE).

form of his brokerage for the group. We will return to these issues in the following chapter.

Moreover, while the Carpophorus of the inscription is probably not the same as the Carpophorus of the *Refutation*, the inscription may shed light on the relationship between Carpophorus and Callistus. For example, from the *titulus* of Marcus Aurelius Carpophorus we can deduce there was a tomb complex. This would encompass a probably a typical house-tomb (*monumentum*), which could also function as the upper entrance to adjoining hypogea, as well as a surrounding plot of land, namely, a garden (*cepotaphium*; Gk. κηποτάφιον). All this space was reserved for his family network, which also comprised a range of non-sanguine members, including Carpophorus' slaves and freedmen, and extending into posterity to those not yet born.

Analogously, Callistus, who was once Carpophorus' slave, was not buried in the *koimeterion* to which Zephyrinus appointed him. Instead, Callistus was buried in the so-called Calepodius Catacombs just north of the Via Aurelia vetus at the third milestone. (This is on the west side of Trastevere, the area of Rome from which Callistus hailed, per the *Liber Pontificalis*).[298] In her discussion of the Calepodius catacomb, Borg suggests that a private benefactor, i.e. an individual owner, must have provided the original nucleus of the hypogeum where Callistus was buried–the hypogeum was never designed to be systematically expanded for a larger community. She then adds that the name Carpophorus, the (former) owner of Callistus, springs to mind as the potential benefactor

[298] *Liber. Pont.* 1.17; Duchesne 1886: 141.

of the hypogeum.[299] Hence, if this was the case, Callistus could have been buried in the tomb-complex reserved for his former owner's family network, including his freedmen, freedwomen, and their posterity. At any event, the scenario shows another potential layer in the complex relationship between Caesar's household and Christians in Rome.

PROFILE SUMMARY

It's time for a summary. Although the inscriptions may be fruitfully compared with one another, there is no corpus of Christian inscriptions. Unlike the material from the imperial slave and freed cooks we saw earlier, these inscriptions do not cluster in a particular gallery, a particular catacomb, or even a particular area. Except for the Primus and Alexander inscriptions, which are both problematically provenienced, the material comes from all over Rome, with one from Ostia. Moreover, some of the inscriptions date to the Severan period, but the Callidromus, Atimetus, and Primus inscriptions probably stretch to the middle or end of the third century or later. These monuments also originate from different families over several generations. There is no evidence that the dedicators or deceased could be acquaintances.[300]

The social, economic, or political profile we can describe as follows: All the dedicators obviously had enough resources, whether as individual imperial persons or with their spouses, to commission an inscription. Additionally, this may have included a painting (Atimetus), or a tomb (Viator, Alexander, and Callidromus' family). Though it is

[299] Borg 2013: 77-8, and n.51.
[300] McKechnie 1999: 439.

difficult to extrapolate, three cases–Viator, Callidromus' family, and Prosenes–indicate a surplus of resources in this regard.

Except for Prosenes there is no evidence of any effective political connection to the imperial court. The people represented do not stand out as particularly powerful or important when compared to the thousands of others who worked for the emperor in Rome at the time. Interestingly, when these epitaphs were commissioned in all but three cases (Callidromus' son, Primus, and Prosenes) the imperial personnel recorded in the were slaves, not freedmen. (This goes against the general epigraphic trend for imperial personnel inscriptions). Some of the persons may have been freed later, but in the case of Viator and Alexander, some may not have been.

Moreover, some dedicators give no information about their status or labor function in the system (e.g. Earinus and Potens). But again, except for Prosenes, those who do record something are lower-level clerical workers, or a domestic slave (Marcus). They have some skill–bookkeeper, assistant, tailor–and therefore some prospects for mobility and opportunity, if they had not already achieved it. But prospects always had significant limitations, death being the most dependable. Prosenes' trek through the system is the outlying exception, not the rule for the imperially-owned. So the persons recorded in these inscriptions are not administrators, and probably never would be based on percentages alone.[301] If Callidromus was an imperial slave, he would be more highly skilled as a manager (*dispensator*), but note that his freedman son, the next generation,

[301] See discussion in Chapter 1.

advanced farther than he and was an administrator's assistant. Thus, the extent to which any of these persons save Prosens would have raised the social profile of Christians or Christianity is difficult to assess.

CONCLUSION

The inscriptions that have been cited for Christian imperial personnel defy the religious categories that have been used to classify them, and challenge us to think about what Christian means in relation to imperially-owned persons. The material is much more complex than some of the past treatments would indicate. In each case we have a commemorative monument, commissioned by survivors in commemorative discourse, for burial and ritual settings, preserved in changing archaeological contexts, and not simply hypertexts to religious credos and Christians. It seems in some cases more probable than not that the epigraphic language could have been used by Christians–or other groups–but we still cannot safely state that the person(s) was a Christian. Consequently, I have resisted making definitive claims about the Christian piety or affiliation of the individuals recorded.

I also tried to emphasize that identifying an imperial slave or freedperson as a Christian–if we really could–still demands further explanation. Christian as an exclusive category, I found, would probably not hold. Imperial personnel had other duties (*pietas*). Instead of showing the rise of Christianity in Rome the examples I supplied showed a grittier picture of how those serving Caesar could have also served Christ in some capacity. This was not one-dimensional, but through a number of activities, overlapping

participations and affiliations, and in an array of ways that might suggest an esteem, honor, and reverence for, or worship of Christ. Finally, this material cannot authenticate early Christian literary references to slaves in Caesar's household or the palace. However, the material can help communicate what early Christian writers were conceiving when they cited Christians who served the emperor. What, more precisely, they were conceiving and why they were doing so is the topic of our next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHRISTIANS' WORLD: CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD IN CHRISTIAN CULTURAL NARRATIVE

"*Caesar is more ours than yours*."--- Tertullian[1]

INTRODUCTION

On a miniature in the *Miroir Historial*, the fifteenth-century encyclopedia of world history in French, the apostle Paul stands in a pulpit. With a white beard and halo, dressed in a deep blue mantle with a red cloak, he preaches to a seated audience of men and women. Their eyes are all trained on him. But in the back a man in a mustard tunic with a crimson belt and green cap is upside down. His arms are bent awkwardly as he seems to fall from high above. In the miniature's next sequence this thin-bearded figure is lying on the floor. His face is pallid and plastic. His eyes closed in death. Paul leans over him. The first two fingers of his right hand offer a sign of benediction. Then, in the miniature's final sequence, Paul stands before the Roman emperor Nero. The crowned ruler is seated on his throne. A sword rests on his shoulder. The index finger of Nero's left hand extends toward the young man in the mustard tunic who is now standing to Nero's left. The young man is wide-eyed and distressed. He shows the emperor the palms of his hands. An armored guard nudges behind him. More guards enter.[2]

This late-medieval miniature captures a distinct piece of early Christian tradition.

[1] Noster est magis Caesar (*Apol*. 33.2).
[2] *Miroir Historial* X:xvi (fr. 50, f. 314v). See Davis 2013: 415.

The man in the mustard tunic is Nero's cupbearer, a slave of Caesar named Patroclus. But, as he will confess to Nero, he is now a soldier of Christ. This defining act will precipitate Paul's own confession before the ruler, and then his martyrdom in Rome.

More than a millennium before the illuminators of this manuscript depicted a Christian slave in Caesar's household as pivotal in world history, early Christian writers from the second and third century were doing something similar. In a variety of texts, they were making reference to Christians who served the emperors. For many scholars these references to Christians are authentic historical descriptions that can attest to Christianity's social, economic, or political progress in Roman society.[3]

Yet, as this chapter will show, these references are not stalks of history to be cut out of the texts and bundled into arguments about Christianity's 'spread' or 'rise.' They are not simple social reflection. Rather, the references and allusions to Christians serving the emperors are embedded in discourses of power. Each author or text had a particular purpose for calling attention to a Christian or Christians who were in the imperial household in Rome or who served the emperors elsewhere. The purpose was not to show that Christians had moved *up* in Roman society as much as it was to claim that Christians had moved *in*. These texts imagine that the emperor's slaves and freedpersons who were Christians, or who had various connections to Christian groups, inhabited the symbolic space close to the imperial power center. The portrayals of figures like Patroclus in early Christian texts allowed Rome's imperial palace to become a Christian landmark, a "fixed

[3] McKechnie 2001: 148-9; Lampe makes a list of Christian members of the *familia Caesaris* that "increasingly appear from Commodus on" (2003: 351). See the methodology of Harnack 1908: 2.42-9.

co-ordinate" for Christian conceptions of cultural space.[4] And those serving the emperor whom the texts claimed as Christian were then indexed in Christian cultural memory as cogent pieces of Christian cultural tradition. These references to Christians in the imperial household thus functioned as core emblematic symbols of Christian cultural identity and cohesion.[5] By citing Christians who served the emperors, Christian writers and communities appropriated Caesar's household as a cultural symbol for working out community authority and for shaping early Christian history and geography in the Roman world. The end result was that in this period, the Christian communities who began to think of themselves as a "new race" in the Mediterranean also wove those serving the emperors into a larger Christian cultural narrative.[6] The miniature in the *Miroir Historial* is a testament to the enduring place Caesar's household has in this narrative.

My examination focuses on thematic groupings of this early Christian literature. Some of these textual groupings I have aligned in chronological order to show a theme's evolution and revisions. But as we shall see, my order and dating of the texts often cuts against conventional analyses. Moreover, contrary to many past treatments, I stress that the memory of Paul's death as a martyr is crucial for analyzing how early Christian communities, over numerous generations, understood the idea of Christians in Caesar's

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[4] Lieu 2004: 237.

[5] I take this language and concept from Christopher Fennell's book (2007: 7-8). He defines culture group as an identifiable population whose members share a particular meaning system that we call *a culture* and who employ that shared belief system to provide a cohesive way or organizing their lives and interactions with one another (2007: 1).

[6] By cultural narrative I mean the big story of a people. This includes all the traditions, myths, and legends that distinguish a people group in the world. The cultural narrative was part of early Christian ethnic reasoning and ethnogenesis. See Buell 2005, especially 52-62.

household. This idea was connected to their reading of Paul's situation in the Philippian letter, and with it, his reference to "Caesar's household" (Phil 4:22). This way of reading Philippians was also connected to early interpretive use of *1 Clement*. So I begin with the *Martyrdom of Paul*, take one step back to correct a scholarly issue with *1 Clement*, then continue my thematic sequence with theological polemics, apologetic literature, martyrdom accounts, and acts of the apostles.

DEATH COMES TO PAUL: MARTYRDOM, MEMORY, AND CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD

A generation or two after Paul's death, Christians in Rome were commemorating him as a martyr. We know this from the letter called *1 Clement* (dating to the turn of the second century CE) which instructs its audience to consider the 'noble example' (ὑπόδειγμα) of Paul's death in the face of persecution.[7] The details of Paul's death, however, including where exactly it occurred, were not clearly established until about a century later. The text known as the *Martyrdom of Paul* reveals those details that would forever be

[7] *1 Clem*. 5. The text does not indicate Paul died in Rome. See Eastman 2014. Most scholars date *1 Clement* to the reign of Domitian, c. 95-6 CE (Eastman 2014: 34; Lindemann 2010: 64-5; Gregory 2006: 227-8; Moreschini and Norelli 2005: 101; Ehrman 2003: 24-5; Lona 1998: 77-8). The conventional date of c. 95 CE comes not from the letter itself but from the link established between a Clement, its presumed author, and Eusebius' information that Clement became bishop of Rome during the reign of Domitian and that there was a persecution during Domitian's reign (Eusebius *Hist. eccl*. 3.13-16 and18; Herron 1989:106-7). Both are problematic. So others have suggested a broader range that extends into the second century. White 2004: 337; Bakke 2001: 10-11; Welborn 1984: 37. It seems Polycarp of Smyrna (69-155 CE) used *1 Clement* and according to Odd Bakke the *terminus ad quem* for *1 Clement* should be 120-140 CE or 115-140 CE (Bakke 2001: 10). Bakke goes on to suggest a date in the first decade of the second century is more appropriate (Bakke 2001: 11). But see also Berding 2011. The first external reference to a letter written by a Clement is in Eusebius' ecclesiastical history, in which he preserves a statement from Hegesippus (110-180CE) who had been in Rome in the time of Anicetus (155-166), and mentions a letter Clement wrote to the Corinthians (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl*. 3.16; 4.22.1). Likewise, Dionysius of Corinth, around 170 CE attests to the reading of a letter sent to them by Clement (Eusebius *Hist. eccl*. 4.23.11). The first reference to a Roman Christian named Clement is from the *Shepherd of Hermas* (II.4; c.110-140 CE).

associated with the apostle to the gentiles. The text describes how Paul was martyred in Rome, beheaded by order of the emperor Nero. But the text also relates that this occurred for a rather specific reason. Nero's cupbearer, a boy named Patroclus, was listening to Paul preach when he nodded off in a high window and fell to his death. Nero's domestic slaves who were also there hearing Paul reported this to Nero. But Paul raised Patroclus from the dead, and the boy then returned to the imperial palace and confessed Christ as king of the whole world to Nero. The emperor wanted answers for this.[8]

Scholars have voiced various opinions on the provenance and date of this text. If there is a consensus it is that the text materialized in Asia Minor in the last decades of the second-century (c.170-80 CE).[9] But complicating matters is the question of the *Martyrdom of Paul*'s relationship to the larger *Acts of Paul*, in which it is the conclusion in the current form of *Acts of Paul*.[10] Some have suggested the *Martyrdom of Paul* was originally an independent work that was circulating on its own.[11] As an independent text

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[8] For a fuller summary see Appendix no. 1.

[9] Pervo 2014: 41, 70-71; Klauck 2008: 48-50; Elliot 1993: 357 all indicate 170-180 CE. Earlier dates have been suggested. Snyder points out that based on the genre, intertexts, and political ideology of the text a Trajanic date (98-117 CE) of composition is possible (2013: 60-3). Eastman also seems to suggest that an earlier date around 150 is preferable (2015: 123).

[10] The North African Christian writer Tertullian around 200 CE reports that a presbyter in Asia composed that "writing" (*scriptura*), referring to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Quod si quae Paulo perperam adscripta sunt, exemplum Theclae ad licentiam mulierum docendi tinguendique defendunt sciant in Asia presbyterum, qui eam scripturam construxit, quasi titulo Pauli de suo cumulans convictum atque confessum id se amore Pauli fecisse, loco decessisse (*Bapt*. 17.5). Though in other writings Tertullian reveals his knowledge about distinct details found in the *Martyrdom of Paul* (e.g. that Paul was beheaded in Rome under Nero), he does not mention a provenance. According to Schneemelcher, for example, the *Martyrdom of Paul* was one of three complexes that make up the *Acts Paul*, each complex with a separate tradition history (Schneemelcher 2003 [1989]: II.217).

[11] See Schneemelcher 2003 [1989]: II.230-31; Schmidt 1904: 118, 128. Similarly, Tajra 1994: 119-20. Eastman leaves open the possibility that *MartPaul* is independent of the *ActPaul* (Eastman 2015: 123).

it was used, perhaps even composed, for the commemoration of Paul's feast day.[12] There is also evidence that it was used for catechetical instruction and baptismal practices in its penultimate form.[13]

What is evident is that the author(s) of the text was writing at a time when prayer, and/or cultic veneration at Paul's *tomb* was the norm. The Greek word used in the text for tomb (τάφος)[14] is the equivalent of the Latin *sepulchrum*, indicating a definable burial space for Paul in the urban topography, and not just a potter's field. So the commemorative space of Paul's martyrdom had taken a physical, if not monumental form at the time the text was composed. Needless to say, the author(s) must have had some idea that in Rome there was a tomb of Paul. Whether this derives from direct experience in Rome or by word-of-mouth tradition is unclear.

In truth, the date of the text could also stretch a bit later than what is commonly proposed. Contrary to Irenaeus, for example, who was writing c.180 CE and who does not specifically mention that Paul died in Rome,[15] the *Martyrdom of Paul* shows a much more developed tradition about Paul's death in the imperial capital.[16] The first western

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[12] Eastman 2015: 123.

[13] Snyder 2013: 64 and 219. Snyder states that based on the manuscript tradition it is clear that the *MartPaul* is a separable literary unit (2013: 54). Others have proposed that that the *Acts of Paul* originated as a single text, developed by a single author on the basis of various sources and ideas including the synoptic Gospels, John, and the Pauline Letters (Pervo 2014: 61, 67) contra Snyder (2013). Similarly Callahan 1998: 80. Be that as it may, the text as we now have it could certainly stand alone as a synthesis of Acts 28:30, Phil 4:22, and 2 Timothy.

[14] *MartPaul* 5.

[15] Callahan 1998: 78. Irenaeus says only that the "very great, very ancient, and universally known church [was] founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul" (*Haer*. 3.3.2).

[16] Eastman 2011: 16. The entire early Christian literature to the middle or even late second century CE knows nothing about Paul's martyrdom in Rome (Koester 1998: 63).

witnesses to Paul's martyrdom by beheading in Rome under Nero begin, in fact, only with Tertullian at the turn of the third-century.[17] Moreover, the early third-century Roman presbyter Gaius, in a statement preserved by Eusebius, boasts that he can "point out the trophies (τρόπαιον) of the apostles" Peter and Paul and tells his opponent Proclus to "go to the Vatican or the the Ostian Way" to find the "trophies (τρόπαιον) of those who founded this church."[18] The latter "trophy" appears to be a monumental tomb of Paul that sat within the large Roman burial grounds on the Ostian road (modern *via Ostiense*).[19] The passage in the *Martyrdom of Paul* would thus assume a context that is close to Gaius.' At the very least, then, it is clear that in the late-second to the early-third century the memories of Paul's death in Rome were evolving in some new, and important, ways.

While scholars have generally recognized this, few have recognized just how momentous "Caesar's household" from Philippians was to the process. The constructed memory of Paul's death in Rome was intimately and dramatically tied to remembering his relationship with "Caesar's Household." Significantly, the opening scene of the *Martyrdom of Paul* emphasizes Caesar's household four times: the "great crowd from Caesar's household" that comes out to hear Paul; Patroclus, Nero's cupbearer; Nero's domestic slaves (οἰκέται) who were at the storehouse (i.e. for grain, Gk. ὅρριον; Lat. *horreum*,) and reported Patroclus' death to Nero; and "the others from Caesar's

[17] Callahan 1998: 80.
[18] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.25.7.
[19] Eastman 2011: 22.

household" who were at the *horreum* and took the restored Patroclus back.[20] The phrase "from Caesar's household" (ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας) that is repeated in the text has been extracted verbatim from Phil 4:22. By weaving a *scripture* that mentions "Caesar's household" into a live narrative about Paul's death the author(s) of the *Martyrdom of Paul* thus found a powerful tool to rework the past and shape the present.

The "Caesar's household" of Phil 4:22 is the tableau vivant from which the character Patroclus emerges. The Patroclus sequence is integral to the whole martyrdom story, and Glenn Snyder has recently suggested that it was an oral and/or written source that was included in the original written form of the martyrdom.[21] The author(s) also seems to have re-scripted a story from Acts 20: 7-12 when a certain Eutychus fell from a window and died while listening to Paul preach.[22] This re-usage prompted Helmut Koester to stress an etiological basis for the *Martyrdom of Paul*: the author must have had no materials to help him find a cause for Paul's imprisonment, trial, and execution. The author, Koester continues, probably did not know anything else but the claim of the Roman church (e.g. the third-century presbyter Gaius) that Rome was the place at which the great apostle was martyred.[23] Indeed, the focus on Patroclus and the reiteration of "Caesar's household" from Phil 4:22 provided an enduring geography for future

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[20] *MartPaul* 1.
[21] Snyder 2013: 54-5.
[22] According to Schneemelcher, the author of the ActPaul probably did know Acts, but is not literarily dependent on it; rather he used traditions that were in circulation about Paul and his work (2003 [1989]: 2.232; also Koester 2000 [1982]: 2.329). Contrarily, many have argued that ActPaul utilized canonical Acts as a major source (Pervo 2014: 67). See summary of debates in Snyder 2013: 5-16.
[23] Koester 1998: 64. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.25.7.

audiences: more than anything else it securely anchored the memory of Paul's martyrdom in Rome.

Equally important for our purposes, Nero's cupbearer Patroclus was *the* decisive character who precipitated Paul's martyrdom. Patroclus' death, resurrection (ἀνέστη), and confession of Christ as "king of the whole world" (ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου) before the supreme ruler Nero paved the way for Paul's own confession, death, and resurrection (ἐγερθῆναι) before Nero.[24] Then at the conclusion of the story, after Paul has reappeared before the supreme ruler, the author again recalls Patroclus.[25] From beginning to end a member of Caesar's household frames Paul's martyrdom.[26]

To my knowledge no modern scholar has proposed that the details of the martyrdom account are historical, nor as far as I can tell has anyone indicated that Patroclus was a historical person, whether in Paul's day or the late-second century.[27] Though the story is legendary and fantastical, there is little reason to doubt that during this period some imperial slaves or freedpersons in Rome were crossing paths with or participating in Christian groups. And as the *Martyrdom of Paul* construed the past–modulating Phil 4:22, canonical Acts, and Paul's death for its current purposes–it allowed

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[24] *MartPaul* 2-3.
[25] *MartPaul* 6.
[26] For a summary of other ancient versions of the account–e.g. Syriac and Coptic–including variations on the imperial cupbearer 'Patroclus' see Tajra 1994: 134-142. On the relationship between the imperial cupbearer and Paul's martyrdom in John Chrysostom's writings see Mitchell 2002: 363-74, especially where she writes that Chrysostom sharpens the direct causal connection between the conversion of Patroclus (the catechesis, κατήχησε) and Nero's decision to execute Paul (2002: 365).
[27] Harrill 2012: 101; Ehrman 2006: 173; Tajra 1994: 118, though he holds out for some historical core (132-3); Kyrtatas says "generally unreliable as historical documents" (1987: 79); Harnack 1908: 43-4, n.4.

the audience(s) to reconstitute present notions of Christians in "Caesar's household."[28] Indeed, the present milieu influenced the imagination as it worked to reproduce the past.[29] The construal of the past meant that the idea of Christians in Caesar's household in late-second to early-third century Rome would have a certain historical, even apostolic, pedigree. For the audiences of the *Martyrdom of Paul*, the story contained an inbuilt reminder that Christians had been in Caesar's household in Rome from the very beginning.

Whether there was ever an imperial slave cupbearer who was a Christian is impossible to say for certain. The fact that an enslaved boy from Caesar's household stars in Paul's martyrdom story and not, say, a rich imperial freedman is perhaps significant.[30] The emphasis on 'Caesar's household' and the character Patroclus demonstrates a primary claim for Christian cultural *space* more than a description of Christians in Caesar's household at the turn of the third century as social, economic, or political risers. The audience could imagine a cupbearer like Patroclus as regularly close to the emperor,

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[28] Castelli 2004: 4. The collective memory was a way of construing the past that enabled a Christian community to constitute and sustain themselves in the present (Castelli 2004: 5).

[29] Halbwachs 1992: 49.

[30] We have no reason to suspect that the author(s) meant to cast Patroclus, or any other members of Caesar's household, as well-to-do or politically important. They certainly had little influence with Nero who only revises his edict against the Christians when "the Romans" clamored en masse before the imperial palace: "Enough is enough, Caesar, for these people [i.e. the Christians] are ours!" We can only guess what social status the original audience would have attributed to Patroclus, but within the the storyworld it may have been a bit precarious since a 'cupbearer' would have evoked a (passive) sexual relationship with the emperor (Pervo 2014: 304, 314). There are multiple signs in the story that Patroclus was Nero's catamite, especially the description of Patroclus and Caesar's other servants as 'boys'(παῖδες). See *MartPaul* 1-2. Recall the discussion in Chapter 3 of 'Caesar's boys' at the *paedagogium*. Note also that the poets Statius and Martial describe the emperor Domitian's imperial slave Flavius Earinus as a catamite, cupbearer, and a boy (*puer*). See Statius, *Silv*. 3.4.7; Martial, *Ep*. 9.11. He is called a boy not only for his age but because he was a eunuch (Martial, *Ep*. 9.7).

just as several of the domestic slaves in the story would have been. Within the storyworld it is this position in Caesar's household that provided the necessary space for Patroclus to make a direct challenge to the emperor's authority. For the Christian audience, then, the cast of Caesar's household opened the imperial palace as a "spatial imaginary."[31] That is, this text worked to resist the spatialities (and the power) of contemporary society and to institute a new site for power through its narrative focus on breaking domestic, and political boundaries.[32] As such, 'Caesar's household' in the *Martyrdom of Paul* was a symbolic framework through which a Christian community could claim a presence and position in their evolving social and political world.

As the text stakes its claim on Caesar's household (πολὺ πλῆθος) it fixes the imperial palace in Rome as a "coordinate" in Christian geographic imagination and cultural space.[33] The text could then assert a Christian "global identity."[34] Time and again the *Martyrdom of Paul* stresses a global purview by alluding to the "whole world."[35] Nero, for example, asks Paul why he secretly entered into the Roman Empire (εἰς τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν) and enlisted soldiers (στρατολογεῖν) from his kingdom. Paul responds that "we levy soldiers not only from your kingdom but also from the entire world (ἐκ τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης)."[36] The claim to universality is a common one in early Christian writings, but it is not a "self-deluding assumption of numerical superiority," as

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[31] Perkins 2002: 119.
[32] Perkins 2002: 119.
[33] Lieu 2004: 237.
[34] Lieu 2004: 235.
[35] *MartPaul* 2-4.
[36] *MartPaul* 3.

Judith Lieu says. Instead, "in an imagined geography the world belongs to the Christians."[37] Such an imagined geography underlies this text's focus on "soldiers" in Caesar's household and the imperial palace.[38] Just as an army that conquers the capital of its enemy also captures *de facto* all the enemy territory, so here "enlisting soldiers" in the imperial capital–in the emperor's palace no less–in effect reordered all the empire's territory as Christian.[39]

The Christian cultural space and geographic imagination I have been describing depended on collective, socially-constructed, memory of Paul's martyrdom in relation to "Caesar's household."[40] Christians in the imperial house were also remembered as instrumental in a landmark event of the community's cultural history.[41] Perhaps needless to say, memory can also interact with 'mythmaking' in some historical projects when events in the past are, with greater or lesser intentionality, reclaimed in the process of the building-up of a collective identity.[42] Nonetheless, the community that revitalized these memories, e.g. through ritual commemoration of Paul's death, threaded Caesar's

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[37] Lieu 2004: 235. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's term '*ideoscape*' is another way to analyze the significance of Caesar's household and the palace in the "imagined worlds" of early Christian communities. Imagined worlds refers to the "multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (1998: 33). "*Ideoscape*s are concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it" (1998: 36).

[38] The military language is a leitmotif of the discourse so that Christians are called "soldiers" and Paul declares that he is a "soldier of Christ" (στρατιώτης εἰμὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

[39] The οἰκουμένη may be playing off of Καίσαρος οἰκία: Christians in the household (οἰκία) of Caesar are emblematic of Christians throughtout the world (οἰκουμένη). The focus on Rome is particularly interesting if the text was composed elsewhere (e.g. Asia Minor) and circulated independently of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Harnack 1905: 6 makes a similar observation.

[40] For recent discussions of social memory see Moreland 2016 and more generally Galinsky 2016.

[41] Kirk 2005: 5.

[42] Castelli 2004: 22, 28. Mythmaking is a byproduct of Christian martyrological discourse and collective memory.

household into an emerging "master commemorative narrative." Within this narrative Caesar's household allowed Christian groups to to continually reconstitute themselves in the empire's cultural landscape.[43]

POLEMICS AT HOME AND ABROAD: SERVING CAESAR IN ORTHODOXY AND HERESY

Sometime in the last decades of the second-century, in the fourth volume of his massive project that would become known as *Against the Heresies*, Irenaeus bishop of Lyons (c. 130-202) called attention to "those faithful ones who are in the royal palace" (*qui in regali aula sunt fideles*).[44] For some interpreters these faithful ones were thought to be the continuation of the "saints in Caesar's household" that Paul had mentioned in first-century Rome, and the same group that decades later would serve the Severan emperors.[45] Listen to this explanation that appeared less than a decade ago in an international, peer-reviewed journal:

> From the very beginning the Christian community of Rome included members of the imperial household, the so-called *familia Caesaris*. Such people often held positions of power or could appeal to other members of the imperial household who held such positions. Paul was told about this section of the Roman community and conveyed to it his special greetings. While some Christians of the imperial household suffered under Nero, this sector of the Roman church survived

[43] Kirk 2005: 5. Early Christian writers seeking to preserve the story of Christian martyrdom (and, one might add, the story of the church's past as a whole) wrote with a broad metanarrative in mind, which framed every detail and interpretation (Castelli 2004: 25).

[44] Irenaeus, *Haer*. 4.30.1. Until Weaver's work in the 1970s on *familia Caesaris*, most have assumed that Irenaeus was referring to a group of Christian court officials in Rome. See Lightfoot 1890 1.1: 63 followed by Harnack 1908: 2.47. Orbe 1985: 413, n. 7.

[45] Lampe reads the Irenaeus' phrase as "imperial slaves or freedpersons at the imperial court," and links this with the subsequent period of Septimius Severus, when "there were Christians on the Palatine Hill" (2003: 117).

> and multiplied under Marcus Aurelius (161–180) and Commodus (180–192). Irenaeus referred to its members as being well known and so did Hippolytus, who gave details. In the early third century, Callistus, a member of the *familia Caesaris*, became bishop of Rome (217-222). Since our information about him has been almost accidentally recorded, there are reasons to believe that he may not have been the first imperial freedman to hold an important position in the Christian community of the imperial capital. There is a good case for Clement [of Rome] being an imperial freedman also.[46]

Leaving aside what we now know about *familia Caesaris* and Paul's "Caesar's household," this explanation defies logic.[47] The assumption, one must gather, is that the original Christian members of the *familia Caesaris* in Paul's day successfully passed on their 'religion' like a genetic trait to their still-enslaved descendants, or recruited into the faith other *familia Caesaris* members, who repeated this process for five or six generations without ever leaving the imperial household. This inter-generational idea is mythological, however. It is the same type of logic underlying the arguments of Christian apologists like Irenaeus who claimed that they were "in touch" with the apostles.[48] So before proceeding to describe Irenaeus' allusion to a royal court we need to set the record straight on a few points.

1 Clement and Imperial Freedmen

One of the key pieces in this chain of *familia Caesaris* Christians that supposedly links Paul and Irenaeus is the figure Clement of Rome. As I described in the introduction, J. B.

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[46] Kyrtatas 2006: 25.
[47] See discussion in Chapters 1 and 2.
[48] Quaesten 1986 [1950]:1.287, a claim that seems to connect Irenaeus directly to Clement and Paul at Rome.

Lightfoot introduced the notion that Clement, the late first-century bishop of Rome and the author of the letter traditionally called *1 Clement*, was a freedman of the imperial Flavian family– T. Flavius Clemens the emperor's cousin.[49] And like the praetorian guard interpretation we encountered earlier, this Lightfoot concoction also shaped the field for more than a century.[50]

The problem with the idea that Clement of Rome, the supposed author of *1 Clement*, was an imperial freedman is that there is no evidence for it.[51] The "epistle of Clement" that Eusebius calls "long and wonderful" never mentions a Clement.[52] It is anonymous. According to the letter itself it was written only by "the Church" in Rome.[53] And despite the fact that the name Clement was used for imperial freedmen in Rome[54] and that it was the cognomen of the emperor Domitian's cousin Titus Flavius Clemens

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[49] Lightfoot conjectured that "Clement the bishop was a man of Jewish descent, a freedman, or the son of a freedman belonging to the household of Flavius Clemens the emperor's cousin" (1890: 1.1, 61). Lightfoot did *not* think that Clement the author of the letter was identical with the Clement of Phil 4:3 (1890: 1.1, 22). Lightfoot's suggestion was responding to the two most recent interpretations: Heinrich Ewald suggested that Clement was the son of the consul Flavius (1859: 297-8) and de Rossi suggested he was the nephew of Flavius Clemens (1865 3: 17-24). De Rossi followed the *Acts of Nereus and Achilleus* and the seventh century itineraries that place the burial of these martyrs in the Catacomb of Domitilla.

[50] Harnack 1908: 2.45; Lake 1912: 4; Richardson 1970: 36-7; Finn 1982: 33-4; Finn 2000: 299. Not everyone subscribed to Lightfoot's idea, however. See e.g. Louth 1987: 19.

[51] See the brief but incisive summary in Lampe 2003: 206-7.

[52] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.16. See Lindemann 1992: 13. Only in the last quarter of the second century– almost a full century after the proposed date of *1 Clement*– was the name Clement attached to the letter by Hegesippus and Dionysius of Corinth. Hegesippus (110-180CE) who had been in Rome in the time of Anicetus (155-166), mentions a letter Clement wrote to the Corinthians during the persecution of Domitian (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.16; 4.22.1). Eusebius says it is good to listen to what he, i.e. Hegesippus, said "after some remarks about the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians." Dionysius of Corinth, around 170 CE attests to the reading of that letter during the liturgy (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 4.23.11). Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE) often cites the letter in his *Miscellanies*, attributing it at times to Clement (*Strom.* 1.7) and at times to the church in Rome (*Strom.* 5.12).

[53] *1 Clem.* 1.1. Thus, even when describing Clement the third bishop in Rome, descendant of the apostles Peter and Paul, Irenaeus says only that the letter was sent by "the church" (*Haer.* 3.3.1).

[54] Lightfoot 1890 1.1: 60-2. See e.g. *CIL* 6.13104, *CIL* 6.29157; *AE* 1975, 55

(*cos*. 95 CE),[55] there is no way to make the identity of the letter's author secure. The name 'Clement,' after all, was quite common.[56] From the second to the fourth century the bishop of Rome, the author of *1 Clement*, and the coworker of the apostle Paul (Phil 4:3) were identified as one and the same Clement. Notwithstanding all the identifications, not a single ancient Christian source indicates that this composite Clement was an imperial freedman. The idea is modern make believe, *tout court*.

On the other hand, Lightfoot also suggested that Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Biton, the couriers who took the letter to the Corinthian church (1 Clem 65), were slaves or retainers of the Caesars, with Ephebus belonging to the emperor Claudius' gens, and Biton to his wife Messalina's Valerian gens.[57] Because Lightfoot assumed Paul wrote Philippians from Rome, he could then write that "[i]t is not impossible therefore that these two delegates of the Roman Church [Ephebus and Biton] were among the members of 'Caesar's household' mentioned in Phil. iv.22, and fairly probable that they were in some way connected with the palace."[58] And since Ephebus and Bito would have been

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[55] See e.g. *CIL* 6.8942. For Harnack, T. Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla "were certainly Christians. Their sons, the presumptive heirs to the throne, were brought up by a Christian mother" (Harnack 1908: II.46). T. Flavius Clemens, according to Cassisus Dio, was put to death on a charge of atheism (*Hist. Rom.* 67.14). Some of these were put to death, Dio Cassius adds, and the rest were at least deprived of their property. The wife of T. Flavius Clemens, Domitilla was banished to the island of Pandateria. Neither Suetonius or Cassisus Dio relates that either T. Flavius Clemens of Flavia Domitilla were Christians. Both Jewish and Christian traditions claim Flavia Domitilla, however. See Talmud (Avodah Zarah 10b) and the Deuteronomy Rabbah 2.25.

[56] As Louth noted (1987: 19), similarly Lampe 2003: 206.

[57] Lightfoot 1890 2.1: 187, n.9.

[58] Lightfoot 1890 2.1: 187, n.9.

included in Paul's salutation to the Philippians, Lightfoot reasoned, they could hardly have been unknown to Paul himself.[59]

A major obstacle to this interpretation stems from the fact that, even by traditional dating, there is a gap of more than thirty years between the death of Paul and the letter *1 Clement*. Even so, this interpretation has also lingered in scholarship,[60] though with some modifications. The most prominent example is its appearance in Peter Lampe's influential book *From Paul to Valentinus*. Lampe rightly rejected Lightfoot's suggestion about 'Clement' as an imperial freedman and correctly located "those of Caesar's house" in Phil 4:22 "in the east."[61] Yet, he advanced Lightfoot's thesis by arguing that Ephebus was an imperial freedman and Biton was a freedman of the Valerian family. He also joined the "Christians members of the *familia Caesaris*" during the time of Commodus with Ephebus and Biton who "*[a]lready* in the first century" were such members.[62]

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[59] Lightfoot 1890 1.1: 27, 29.

[60] Lona 1998: 637.

[61] Lampe 2003: 184, n.1.

[62] Lampe 2003: 351, and n.1. My emphasis. His argument proceeds thusly: Lampe first points out that the Greek cognomens of the two betray a slave background. Lampe then leaves off Ehpebus entirely–as if an obvious fact that he was an imperial freedman–to cite a *titulus* inscription from Rome listing freedpersons from the Valerian gens (*CIL* 6. 27948). This inscription dates to first century, says Lampe, and reveals that "Judaism and Christianity of the first century had success with more than one member of the domestic staff of the Valerian clan." The basis of this claim is one of the inscription's recorded freedpersons. Her name is Valeria Maria. Since the cognomen Maria is found "only seven times in *CIL* volume 6," Lampe argues, it represents in this case a Semitic name. There must have been Jewish members in the Valerian clan, Lampe reasons, who gave this name to the slave girl at her birth. So Maria "was in all probability a Jewish or Jewish-Christian," according to Lampe (2001: 123). How we know this Maria could have been Jewish-Christian, Lampe does not explain. Nonetheless, "this opens the possible background of Valerius Biton's Christian faith," he asserts. Biton "experienced the beginnings of Roman Christianity in the synagogues (Lampe 2003: 184). Lampe then pushes farther into the speculative by offering the "interesting scenario" that this "Maria grew up to be a Jewish (or Jewish Christian) freedwoman and that she could even have been Biton's mother or aunt" (Lampe 2003: 185). For Lampe, this scenario explains not only how Biton became a Christian, but also how Christianity in Rome developed initially from the Roman synagogues. Lampe argues that a coexistence can be demonstrated between Jewish and Christian slaves and freedmen in

Finally, Lampe suggests that both Biton and Ephebus enjoyed respect and authority in the Roman Christian community because of their "social status," and given the "prominent social position of imperial freedmen" many of whom "could be counted among the upper class," the two envoys from the Roman church thus represent the "sociological apex of Roman Christianity in the first century."[63]

Again, there is little evidence for this. The names Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Biton are themselves insufficient to establish that the two were freedmen. Greek cognomens could also be used by Roman citizens[64] and thus are inconclusive for determining whether these two individuals were former slaves. There are also plenty of examples of people who bore imperial names but who were themselves non-imperial.[65] So while Ephebus and Biton may have names derived from the *Claudii* and *Valerii* gens respectively, this does not mean that either was an imperial freedman, or that either had any advantageous connection to an imperial household.[66] We simply do not know their status. Moreover, large aristocratic families flooded the market with their namesakes, and

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the Valerian gens and the Roman synagogues including the *Augustesioi* (συναγωγή των Αύγουστησίων), which he states, was formed by imperial freedmen. Jewish slaves and freedmen, Lampe concludes, even of the emperor himself, along with their descendants offered themselves as the bridgehead on which Jewish-Christianity of the 40s CE penetrated the world capital Rome. See Lampe 2001: 127.

[63] Lampe 2003: 185-6.

[64] While Greek *cognomina* (and other foreign names) have long been recognized as a broadly reliable indicator of unfree origins, it is not entirely certain as a sign of freed status since some freedmen even in Roman Ostia also gave their children Greek *cognomina* (Mouritsen 2004: 283-5 and Table 4 on p. 286). For specific examples from the Greek east see see van Nijf 2010: 181-2 and Madsen 2009: 99-100. Andreas Lindemann doubts that the two men were Roman citizens (1992: 180).

[65] There are too many examples to cite, but a few just of the Tiberii Claudii from Rome: *AE* 1925,14; *AE* 1931, 89; *AE* 1969/70, 32; *AE* 1975, 48; *AE* 1976, 90; *AE* 1981,145; *AE* 1998,1613; *AE* 1999, 390.

[66] Lindemann noted this (1992: 180).

given the scarce information we have about Ephebus and Biton we simply cannot know to whom exactly they were connected.[67]

Just as significant, there is no indication in the letter, or indeed in any other piece of early Christian literature, that either of the two envoys from Rome to Corinth were imperial freedmen. Ephebus and Biton along with Fortunatus formed a task force meant to convey authority on behalf of the letter writer(s).[68] Considering the conventional image of imperial freedmen as powerful people–an image so well-known that the Romans satirized it–[69] it is surprising that the author(s) of the letter, who were attempting to exercise authority, make no mention that the two envoys were freedmen from the emperor's house.[70] Other Christian authors jumped at the chance to identify Christians as members of the imperial household, and they also made their identifications explicit. Notwithstanding modern efforts, however, there are no grounds for identifying imperial personnel behind *1 Clement*.

Irenaeus of Lyon: The Royal Palace(s) and A Global Movement

When we read Irenaeus' remark about "faithful ones in the royal palace" we should do so without conjuring personas from *1 Clement*, much less from Paul. Some interpret

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[67] Biton, for example, could have been the son of a freedman of the Valerian gens, as Lampe himself also allows in a 2001 article (Lampe 2001: 123).

[68] 1 Clem 59:1 and 63:3. Their task was to persuade the Corinthians to put to rest the futile faction, or revolt (στάσεως)–which had apparently deposed Corinthian presbyters. They were to serve as witnesses (μάρτυρες), to restore peace in Corinth quickly (τάχος), and bring the church in Corinth to obedience (ὑπήκοος).

[69] The poet Martial in a roughly contemporaneous work (*Ep*. 2.32). See opening of Chapter 1.

[70] The letter says only that they were "faithful and temperate men" (ἄνδρας πιστοὺς καὶ σώφρονας) who had "lived blamelessly from youth to old age" (ἀπὸ νεότητος ἀναστραφέντας ἕως γήρους ἀμέμπτως).

Irenaeus' faithful ones as believers who belonged to the *familia Caesaris* in Rome,[71] and this indicates that Christianity had progressed into the upper echelons of society.[72] The phrase Irenaeus uses to describe these persons, however, is not *familia Caesaris*, but ***qui in regali aula sunt***. Despite the scholarly habit of using *familia Caesaris* as a catchall, we cannot equate these two phrases. '*Familia Caesaris*' was a more specific designation. By contrast, when we consider Irenaeus' likely Greek in the the ***Adversus Haeresis*** the phrase suggests a different group of people, not *famlia Caesaris*.[73]

Irenaeus references the 'royal court' one other time in his extant writings. In a letter preserved by Eusebius called "On the Sole Sovereignty" or "That God is not the Author of Evil," Irenaeus writes to a former companion named Florinus.[74] The letter admonishes Florinus for his opinions (δόγματα), which according to Irenaeus, are inconsistent (ἀσύμφωνα) with the church, lead to impiety (ἀσέβεια), and are not even proclaimed by the heretics (αἱρετικοί) outside the church.[75] Florinus, as Irenaeus understood him, had become a partisan of Valentinus and a "renegade presbyter"

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[71] Thompson 2015: 226, and n.27; Hill 2006: 21; Lampe 2003: Kyrtatas 1987: 80.

[72] See Clarke 1966: 95. González 1990: 110-11; Kyrtatas 1987: 80. As Harnack exclaimed, this "proves that there was quite a group of Christians at court, and that their circumstances were good" (Harnack 1908: 2.47). Lampe says "They had a good livelihood" (2003: 117).

[73] Irenaeus' treatise was originally composed in Greek, but only portions of the presumed Greek original were preserved in Eusebius' ecclesiastical history (c. 31-325 CE). The complete text was only preserved in a Latin translation that seems to be fairly literal but has been dated by scholars between the mid-third century and late-fourth century. See Quasten 1986 [150]: 1.290-1.
lvesmaki 2007: 417.

[74] Behr 2013: 67; Hill 2006: 76-77. These fragments are preserved only in Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 5.20.1).

[75] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.20.2.

operating in Rome.[76] So Irenaeus reminds Florinus of the history and pedigree that the two of them shared back in their homeland. "These opinions," Irenaeus writes, "the presbyters who came before us and who accompanied the apostles did not hand on (παραδοῦναι) to you. For I knew you, while I was still a boy in lower (κάτω) Asia at Polycarp's feet (παρὰ Πολυκάρπῳ) when you were faring illustriously (λαμπρῶς πράσσοντα) in the royal court (ἐν τῇ βασιλικῇ αὐλῇ) and trying to make a good impression on him."[77]

This Greek phrase (ἐν τῇ βασιλικῇ αὐλῇ) is the direct equivalent of the *in regali aula* that is preserved the *Adversus Haeresis*.[78] When this Greek phrase (ἐν τῇ βασιλικῇ αὐλῇ) is used–and frequently this is in the plural–it usually indicates a group of local officials in a provincial court.[79] For example, when the second century astrologer, and Irenaeus' contemporary, Vettius Valens (c. 120-175CE) describes which astrological signs determine which outcomes for particular types of people, he relates:

> Those who are assigned a moderate hypostasis (ὑπόστασιν) are trusted with royal business (βασιλέως πράγματα), are stewards (διοικοῦσι) and superintendents

[76] According to Hill this induced Irenaeus–just a few chapters before he mentions those in the palace–to elaborate on the necessity of following the faithful presbyters "who are in the church" and who "possess the succession from the apostles" (Hill 2006: 22). See also Behr 2013: 52; Lampe 2003: 298; Eusebius *Hist. eccl*. 5.20.1 mentions Florinus was attracted to "the Valentinian error."

[77] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl*. 5.20.2. Early interpreters thought the phrase indicated the emperor's physical presence in Smyrna. See Hill 2006: 18-19. Lawson 2005: 154. Perhaps not surprisingly, current opinion is that Florinus was a Christian member of the *familia Caesaris*. Hill 2006: 21; Lampe 2003: 351 n.1, and 313.

[78] Clarke 1966: 96.

[79] Clarke had earlier suggested that Florinus was "merely a local functionary" of the "governor's court in the province of Asia" is closer to mark (Clarke 1966: 96). Herodian uses a similar phrase (βασίλειος αὐλή) for the palace in Rome (*Hist*. 1.7.6; 3.11.17), but also for imperial quarters on a military expedition (*Hist*. 1.5.8; also 1.6.1).

> (διευθύνουσιν)—but are subject to ups and downs and hatred. Some become or are associated with governors (στρατιωτικοὶ); some receive a salary (ὀψώνιον)[80] at the royal courts (ἐν βασιλικαῖς αὐλαῖς) or in public positions (δημοσίοις τόποις).[81] They are not however elevated so high in their livelihoods as they are sunk in inglorious display and in careworn, broken misery.[82]

As we see, those who worked in the royal courts (note the plural) dealt with imperial and provincial affairs alongside governors, could be public officials themselves, and clearly had some resources at their disposal.

The same usage of the phrase appears in Epiphanius' "Medicine Chest." The fourth-century heresiologist records that after the theologian Origen (c. 184-253) fled Alexandria for Judea, he met Ambrose who was a distinguished (διαφανής) imperial official, or literally, "a distinguished person in the royal courts" (ἐν αὐλαῖς βασιλικαῖς). Once more, note the plural even when referring to an individual. Ambrose became Origen's patron. And while Origen was in Tyre, burning the midnight oil to produce voluminous works such as the Hexapla, Ambrose employed Origen's stenographers and assistants (ὑπηρετοῦσιν), bought all the papyrus (χάρτην), and took care of his other expenses.[83]

Based on these descriptions it seems that Florinus was likely employed in some official capacity in a provincial court or palace in Asia Minor.[84] Irenaeus does not specify

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[80] The plural ὀψώνια would be wages for labor (*LSJ* s.v. ὀψώνιον 3, p.1283). An ὀψώνιον is also a magician's fee.
[81] The term τόπος can also mean district or department in Egypt (*LSJ* s.v. τόπος 6, p.1806).
[82] Vettius Valens, *Anthology* 9.2.73.
[83] Epiphanius, *Haer*. 64.3. See also Eusebius, *Hist. eccl*. 6.23.1.
[84] Variations of the term "illustrious" (λαμπρῶς), whose Latin equivalents include *clarus*, *claritas*, *clarissimus*, *splendidus*, were often part of the honorific vocabulary attached to those in official positions

Florinus' status as freeborn, freed, or imperial freed, but from these hints we can gather that Florinus had achieved (πράσσειν) some fair status, at least from Irenaeus' viewpoint.

But rather than *familia Caesaris*, Florinus and those "in the royal court(s)" are evocative of the *apparitores*. This was a group of free men–that is, either freed or freeborn–[85] who worked for the 'state' (*res publica*) to aid the Roman magistrates, priests, and the emperors in both Rome and in the provinces.[86] Nicholas Purcell, the first scholar to thoroughly excavate what he called the sections of Roman society between the status of slave and equestrian, articulated several layers of *apparitores*. Much like we saw with imperial personnel at Ephesos, these positions ran the gamut from scribes, clerks, secretaries, amanuenses (*scribae*) to keepers of the sacred chickens (*pullarii*).[87] Those employed in these services, like so many other groups in the Roman Empire, formed as colleges (*collegia*) and ordered themselves in corporate bodies (*ordines* and *decuriales*), assigned themselves honorific titles and ceremonial offices.[88]

The *apparitores* worked with and alongside public slaves and imperial personnel

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(Hill 2006: 20). So from Ephesos, Flavius Iulius Constantinus, the proconsul of Asia, was honored as a *vir classimus* (*AE* 1988, 1021). *AE* 1975, 792; *CIL* 3.6075 (fragmentary); *AE* 1998, 1305 (from Pergamum).

[85] Purcell suggests mostly freed (1983: 132, 137); Horster suggests mostly freeborn (2011: 334).

[86] Millar 1977: 66-7. See *AE* 1980, 98.

[87] There are also copiers and bookkeepers (*librarii*); agents, messengers, or summoners, i.e. those who summon persons before the magistrates (*viatores*), official attendants (*lictores*), heralds (*praecones*); bearers or carriers of luggage, supplies and other materials (*geruli*); supernumerary attendants of magistrates (*accensi*); medics (*medici*), architects (*architecti*), to diviners and soothsayers (*haruspices*) and so on. For general description and history see Purcell 1983.

[88] Purcell 1983: 128.

in the administration.[89] And there are several cases in which imperial freedmen were also *apparitores*,[90] the most famous of which was perhaps Trajan's freedman whom we met last chapter, Marcus Ulpius Phaedimus. As an *apparitor* he was the attendant closest to the emperor (*lictor proximus*).[91] The *apparitores*, however, were comprised of primarily freeborn and (non-imperial) freed men who were "avid for any opening which could offer social and financial advancement."[92] Because *apparitores* were free men they were employed, apparently with a salary, as we know from the *lex Ursonensis*–the founding charter of the Roman colony at Urso, Spain (*colonia Iulia Genetiva*).[93] But it is likely that the *apparitores* at Urso were only 'part-time,' and like the magistrates they attended, had other sources of income.[94] The *apparitores* were thus also involved in business (*negotium*).[95]

To tie all this together, then, what we know about Irenaeus underlying Greek

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[89] For example: Turannus verna tab(ularius) apparitor(um) / sacris omnium immunis / is dedit Ti(berio) Claudio Aug(usti) l(iberto) veterano / columbarium totum / [[…]] is intulit Ianthum Aug(usti) l(ibertum) / [[ministri]] fratrem suum (*CIL* 6.1959).

[90] For example: C(aius) Iulius // Aug(usti) l(ibertus) // Clarus / sibi et suis et / Daphnini coniugi sua[e] / inter apparitores (*CIL* 6.1957).

[91] *CIL* 6.1884.

[92] Purcell 1983: 132.

[93] See Horster 2011.

[94] Horster 2011: 335.

[95] One of the more prominent examples is a second-century civic benefactor in Ephesos named Tiberius Claudius Secundus. He was honored by the *gerousia* with a marble statue, the base of which was found in the upper agora in front of the *bouleuterion*. The bilingual text records that Secundus was a tribunician agent (*viator tribunicius*/ οὐιάτορ τριβουνίκιος), a reserve soldier (*accensus velatus*/ ἀκκῆνσος οὐηλᾶτος), and an attendant of the assembly (*lector curiatus*/ λείκτορ κουριᾶτος) (*IvE* 5.1544). Another inscription from the lower, commercial agora also records that Secundus was a patron of the Ephesian citizens who were in the slaving business (*qui in statario negotiantur*) (*IvE* 3.646. Secundus had a Greek freedman named Claudius Hermes who was also a benefactor for the Ephesians (*IvE* 3.857).

phrase for "in the royal court(s)" (ἐν αὐλαῖς βασιλικαῖς),[96] what we know about Florinus, and about the *apparitores* matches Irenaeus' description of those "faithful ones in the royal court" in his *Adversus Haeresis*. The 'faithful ones' refer to persons associated with business activities (*negotium*; *vendit*; *lucrari*; *emit*) and who have an undisclosed amount of materials and provisions (*utensilia*), which they acquire from working as officials in a royal court and which they share out to the best of their ability (*secundum virtutem praestat*).[97] If these officials were in positions analogous to the *apparitores* we can get a rough comparison of their salaries from the *apparitores* at Urso. The scribes who worked for the magistrates (*duoviri*) there earned an annual salary of 1200 sesterces, attendants earned 600, messengers 400, clerks 300. At 700-1,200 HS per year the *apparitores*–in the city of Urso, at least–were not well-off.[98] This is probably why they were also engaged in other business activities. More importantly, though, sheer economics was not Irenaeus' point.

Often lost in the interpretations of Irenaeus' reference to the royal court is his overall polemical purpose. The five-volume heresiological treatise that Irenaeus calls the *Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So-Called* (ἔλεγχος και άνατροπή της

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[96] It is also worth noting here that in the manuscript tradition of *Against the Haeresies* the Armenian translation of the Greek–variously dated between the fifth- and eighth-century–has the plural 'royal courts.' See Rousseau 1965: 2.772; Hill 2006: 18; Minns 2010: 6. For bibliography on translations see Quasten 1986 [1950]: 1.291. The Armenian manuscript is Matenadaran of Erevan (ms 3710).

[97] For fuller text see Appendix no. 2. Some interpreters think this passage attests to Christianity's socio-economic advance into the upper echelons of Rome's society by the time of Commodus (Clarke 1966: 95). See González 1990: 110-11; Kyrtatas 1987: 80. As Harnack exclaimed, this "proves that there was quite a group of Christians at court, and that their circumstances were good" (Harnack 1908: 2.47). Lampe says "They had a good livelihood" (2003: 117).

[98] Horster: 2011: 335.

ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως) was a decade-long project seeking to discredit the second-century Roman Christian Valentinus (c. 100-160) and his successor Ptolemy.[99] By the time Irenaeus writes the fourth book of this project he aims to refute more specific objections of his opponents–for example, the nature of the creator, the salvation of the body, and in particular the role of Moses and his writings. The Creator and author of the Law is the one god, Irenaeus argues, the father of Christ; Christ himself observed the law; the law and the gospel are not in opposition to each other as if they were from different gods, and so on and so forth.[100]

The passage in which Irenaeus mentions those in the royal palace combats a charge that the god who commanded the Israelites to take vessels (*vascula*) of all kinds from the Egyptians during their Exodus should be rejected since that god promotes theft.[101] Those who think this way, Irenaeus responds, "are ignorant of the righteous dealings of god." To make his argument work however, Irenaeus needs a contemporary parallel for the ancient Israelites and patriarch Joseph. The "faithful ones in the royal court" help fulfill this need. And as Graeme Clarke once observed, Irenaeus is arguing by analogy: The Jews are a *type* for those "in the faith," as both receive vessels (*vasa*) in

[99] Smith 2014: 133. The first volume, according to Irenaeus, laid out "these men's system" to show it as a recapitulation of all the heretics going back to Simon Magus. The second volume, Irenaeus says, exposed and subverted that system. In volume three Irenaeus marshals the apostles, the notion of the apostolic authority of the church's bishops, and scripture he considered authoritative to undercut his antagonists' opinions.
[100] Behr 2013: 95-97.
[101] Irenaeus, *Haer*. 4.30.1.

their dealings with the Gentiles.[102] So just as the patriarch Joseph received *res* from the Egyptians, some faithful ones now get *utensilia* from Caesar. We must, therefore, understand Irenaeus' reference to the royal court as polemical, but which may still be hostile as in Joseph's case. Irenaeus' reference was a plausible support for his analogical argument–an argument that uses a biblical allusion to assert that the faithful make a living at the very *centers* of imperial life.[103]

In addition to his theological argument that aligned the god of the Jews with the god of the Christians, Irenaeus also uses the 'faithful in the royal court' in his argument about global orthodoxy. Geography was crucial for Irenaeus' project and his geographical purview was global. He imagined an orthodox, apostolic tradition that encompassed the 'whole-world' (*Haer*. 3.3.1). The reference to faithful ones in the royal court was part of his claim to worldwide orthodoxy.

It has usually been assumed that by 'royal court' Irenaeus meant specifically the

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[102] The use of *utensilia* is here synonymous with *vasa*. See Pliny, *NH* 13.11.22. Irenaeus coopts LXX Exodus 11:2 and 12:35, which record that the Israelites took from the Egyptians items (σκεύη) of silver and gold. The Vulgate thus renders the phase with σκεύη as "vasa argentea et aurea." Irenaeus' basic apologetic point is that the Egyptians owed the Israelites their very lives and everyone–including those in the royal court–uses goods they have taken from someone else. It is simply a part of life. Gonzales 1990: 109-110.

[103] Clarke 1966: 96. Some have recently argued that Irenaeus' multivolume project was not completed at once but in a few instantiations. See Chiapparini 2014: 97 and Kalvesmaki 2007: 417. So others have proposed that Irenaeus wrote to Florinus ("On the Sole Sovereignty") prior to book four, and thus the *Adversus Haeresis* passage concerning the faithful ones in the royal court would have been a jibe at Florinus himself (Behr 2013: 67; Hill 2006: 22, 76-77). According to Hill, Florinus induced Irenaeus–just a few chapters before he mentions those in the palace–to elaborate on the necessity of following the faithful presbyters "who are in the church" and who "possess the succession from the apostles" (Irenaeus, *Haer*. 4.26.2; Hill 2006: 22). The arguments for this particular chronology are not conclusive, however. Though the use of 'royal court' in both texts is important, the precise connection between book four of Irenaeus' treatise and his letter to Florinus is unclear.

believers in Rome's imperial court.[104] This is not necessarily the case. If anything, the only precise geographic reference we have to a 'royal court' in Irenaeus' writings is Asia Minor. But Irenaeus' *Adversus Haeresis* aimed for several targets in a multi-centered geography, including Rome and Asia Minor.[105] In a recent article on Irenaeus' cultural geography, for example, Jared Secord notes that Irenaeus' map of the world had four regions–a commonplace of classical geography and favored in rhetorical handbooks–with the middle regions of the world (*kosmos*) comprising multiple locations. Specifically, Irenaeus' world centers included the apparent apostolic churches of Rome, Ephesos, Smyrna, and Corinth. Three of the centers are in the Greek East, perfectly understandable from a Greek émigré, and these four are the only churches named in the entirety of his treatise.[106] On the ground, moreover, heresiological works like Irenaeus' assumed a wide readership and extensive geographic circulation.[107] Only a few decades after Irenaeus composed his treatise, for instance, it was circulating in Alexandria and Oxyrhynchus in

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[104] Hill 2006: 18. McKechnie 1999: 428; McKechnie 2001: 141; Kyrtatas 187: 80.

[105] The convention is that Irenaeus wrote his treatise specifically for Christians in Rome (Behr 2013: 75; Payton 2012: 5; Lampe 2003: 117). Among other reasons for this convention, Irenaeus' principle opponents–Valentinus, Ptolemy, and Marcion–had lived and taught in Rome; Irenaeus challenges his opponents claims to knowledge by reference to the visible, unbroken succession of apostles in Rome (Osborn 2004: 23. Irenaeus, *Haer*. 3.3.1-3); Irenaeus himself had apparently on several occasions spent time in Rome (Eusebius *Hist. eccl*. 5.4.1; Smith 2014: 133; Minns 2010: 1-2; Osborn 2004: 3-4; Payton 2012: 2; Nautin 1961: 93); and on other occasions Irenaeus wrote to the community in Rome, e.g. in the so-called Quatrodeciman controversy (Eusebius, *HE* 5.24.11-17). On the other hand, it has been suggested that Irenaeus' treatise was not written for Christians Rome, where there was no need of a list of bishops, but more probably for those in Asia and Phrygia. Contemporaneous with Irenaeus' project, Christians in Gaul and Lyons, specifically, were sending letters to Asia and Phyrgia, e.g. the *Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons* (see Grant 1997: 6 and Eusebius, *Hist. eccl*. 5.1.3, 5.3.2).

[106] Irenaeus, *Haer*. I.10.2; 27; Secord 2012: 26, 29.

[107] This was certainly the case with Justin Martyr's *Apology*, which Irenaeus knew and used (Smith 2015: 77-78, 81).

Upper Egypt–nearly two thousand miles away.[108]

So by withholding a particular geographic reference to "the faithful in the royal court," but simultaneously aiming his project at the perceived orthodox centers, Irenaeus could in fact intimate a worldwide geography. Wherever there was a royal court, Irenaeus would argue, 'faithful ones' could be found there. This was a kind of "religious globalization" that involved, among other characteristics, the intensification of connectedness through the circulation of people, symbols, images, and information across spaces.[109] For example, Irenaeus attempted to connect local and supra-local Christian communities by maintaining that the traditions of the Roman church reported by Clement, Hermas, and Justin were consistent with his own Asian traditions from John, Polycarp, and Papias.[110] And like Hegesippus before him, he asserted that there is a congruence of teaching between all major Christian centers.[111] Likewise, as part of the global circulation of his religious content, his allusion to faithful ones in a royal court(s) connected the local and the universal. The allusion enabled his audiences–wherever they were– to imagine themselves as part of a global religious community in which Christians were working in official positions in the centers of the imperial world.[112]

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[108] Smith 2015: 72; Payton 2012: 3

[109] Bielo 2015: 136. Brickell and Datta (2011:4) use the term "translocal geographies" to describe the situatedness and connectedness of places and spaces to a variety of locales. Edelman and Haugerud 2005: 22. "Globalization" also includes disconnectedness–exclusion, marginalization, and other modes of inequity that result from a work against 'heresies.'

[110] Grant 1997: 7.

[111] Brent 2012: 36. The geographical narrative in Acts is particularly significant to Irenaeus, who emphasizes that Paul preaches the same message wherever he goes (Secord 2012: 26).

[112] Bielo 2015: 148.

'Hippolytus of Rome': Caesar's Household and A Local Dispute

If Irenaeus' polemics utilized the 'faithful ones in the royal court(s)' to prove a theological argument and construct a global religious community, the author conventionally known as 'Hippolytus of Rome' was more interested in demolition.[113] Approximately thirty years after Irenaeus, this author produced a similar polemical project.[114] The original ten-volume Greek treatise called the *Refutation of All Heresies* (Κατὰ πασῶν αἱρέσεων ἔλεγχος) attempted to show that every heresy derives from a Greek school of philosophy. The author explains the various Greek philosophical systems, the cults and mysteries (now lost books two and three), astrology and magic, with the remainder of the work focused on particular forms of what the author deems heresies.[115] The ninth book is an "account and refutation of those heresies that have

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[113] There is a long and complicated debate about the authorship of numerous works by a third century Christian writer called Hippolytus. Scholars have increasingly argued that the author of the *Refutation of All Heresies* is anonymous. From the work, though, details about the author's life emerge: the author depicts himself as a learned, scholar-bishop in Rome who exercised authority over a community there at the end of the Severan period (Litwa 2016: xxxii-xl). Brent 1995: 287-90.

[114] Allen Brent suggests the author is anonymous and completed the work before the death of Callistus in 222 CE, with the events of the text set around 218 CE (Brent 1995: 287-290). Miroslav Marcovich suggests the author is Hippolytus of Rome, and that book nine was probably written after Callistus' death, i.e. between 222-235 CE (1986: 17, 40). There is some pushback against the idea of a Roman Hippolytus, however. According to J. A. Cerrato, the ninth book of the work became the foundation of reconstructing a western, Roman Hippolytus and scant support can be gleaned from the text for the supposition that the author was a permanent resident of Rome (Cerrato 2002: 94, 103). Moreschini and Norelli distinguish between an Eastern corpus attributed to a Hippolytus and a western corpus attributed to Roman Hippolytus, including the *Refutation*, though the individual author may or may not have been named Hippolytus (Moreschini and Norelli 2005: 236). Eusebius is the earliest extant writer to make reference to the name Hippolytus, and to speak of Hippolytan texts, including the *Refutation*, but he does not give a geographic reference. He states only that Hippolytus "presided over a church, somewhere or other" (*Hist. eccl.* 6.20.2). See Moreschini and Norelli 2005: 232-47; Cerrato 2002: 27. I use 'Hippolytus' simply for convenience.

[115] Moreschini and Norelli 2005: 238.

sprung up in our day."[116] And it is here that the author summoned "Caesar's household" to dig up his opponent's past.

Because there seem to be such arresting historical details in this section of the work it is easy to forget that this is also one of the great smear campaigns of ancient literature.[117] The description of Carpophorus and Callistus is the climax of the entire polemical project,[118] and here above all else the author's sole objective is to expose his bête noire Callistus as a fraud (γόης) and a knave (πανοῦργος).[119] The fact that this author goes so far as to claim–through Carpophorus–that Callistus is not even a Christian speaks to the underlying tensions between Christian communities during this period, and the degree of animosity that this author harbored.[120] The feud with Callistus was also deeply personal (*Haer*. 9.12.15, 21). But the author's vitriol is so pervasive that, despite his verisimilitude, we cannot simply speak of 'history' here.[121] Even those who accredit this

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[116] *Ref*. 9.1.1

[117] Interpreters have typically presumed that Hippolytus' account of Carpohporus and Callistus is historically candid. See e.g. Frend 2014: 317-18; Brent 2009: 243; Batson 2001: 96; Andreau 1999: 67. For an older treatment, Gülzow 1967. As such, the account is also part of a larger scholarly narrative that has tried show the (continual) presence of Christians in 'the' *familia Caesaris*, especially from the emperor Commodus on (Lampe 2003: 351).

[118] Marcovich 1986: 39.

[119] *Haer*. 9.12.16 and 20; Marcovich 1986: 38-9. Remarkably, Döllinger claimed that "Without a doubt, Hippolytus had not the conscious intention of slandering Callistus" (1876: 108).

[120] Brent describes the social context of Books IX and X of the *Elenchos* as "a factionalised community of house Churches in the throes of a revolution (1995: 1). Marcovich says the work seems to reveal a lonely schismatic bishop crying out for recognition (1986: 41). More recently Brent emphasized that the division between Hippolytus and Callistus, which has often been described as a "schism" with the Callistus as duly consecrated in opposition to Hippolytus as an anti-pope, is certainly anachronistic and reflects a post-Cyprianic conceptualization of church order (2013: 179).

[121] See e.g. Lampe 2003: 335: n.13.

account still struggle to make historical sense of the details.[122] Once we realize that the story is satirical and fictionalized, however, we no longer labor in vain.

We can begin to reassess the slave Callistus and reexamine his owner Carpophorus from "Caesar's household" by first noting that the author's story is rife with stereotypes about slaves and slave owners. Dishonest slaves who steal and flee–like Callistus allegedly does–and slave-owners who search out for their fugitive property–like Carpophorus apparently does–are tropes of Roman comedy and satire, not to mention the gospel parables (e.g. Luke 16:1-8).[123]

What is more, the account in the *Refutation* is remarkably similar to the satirist Lucian's (c. 125-180 CE) two works *The Runaways* and *The Passing of Peregrinus*. In *The Runaways*, for example, the goddess Philosophy bemoans how slaves leave their work and disguise themselves as would-be Cynic philosophers. They don the short cloak, sling wallet, and staff, she says to Zeus. They then go around taking money (χρυσίον) from whomever they can, collecting tribute, and trying to pass themselves off as those truly (ὀρθῶς) practicing philosophy.[124] Philosophy describes more broadly how every city has such upstarts who by thievishness (ἁρπάγη) and always hanging around tables

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[122] See e.g. Lampe 2003: 335: n.13. Döllinger tried to smooth out the narrative into a more palatable history–and cast the Jews in the story as the instigators–but he also had to speculate about how Hippolytus and Carpophorus knew about all the events in the story (1876: 109-10).

[123] Joshel and Petersen 2015: 13-14; Joshel 2011: 154; Bradley 1994: 21; he also comments that the scene of Callistus is like "one of the slaves the Roman jurists were all too familiar with" (1994: 146); Glancy 2011: 69; Westermann 1955: 73. See Pliny the Elder, *Nat*. 33.26; Juvenal (11.191-2) thought it natural to associate domestic slaves with descruction and loss of property (Bradley 1994: 115). For New Testament materials see Harrill 2006: 61-84.

[124] Lucian, *Runaways* 12-15, 22.

(τραπέζα)–that is, banking counters and/or dining tables–acquire fortunes (πλοῦτος).[125] They eventually throw off the philosopher's cloak and live lavishly. But of course, as Philosophy explains, these people are frauds (γοής).[126] All the gods are astounded at the offence. So Hermes, Heracles, and Philosophy then form what amounts to a divine posse whose mission is to expose the fake philosophers and reveal the genuine ones (ὀρθῶς). They set out for Thrace and as they arrive they meet a man who is searching for three rogues (γοής) who also happen to be fugitive slaves (δραπέτης). The gods perceive that these are exactly the types of knaves for whom they are searching, and along the way the slaves' owners join in the search. As the story concludes, the divine posse together with the slave-owners find and expose the fugitive slave frauds who are punished and sent back with their owners.

This satire is the sequel, as it were, to *The Passing of Peregrinus* in which Lucian exposes the life of a Cynic poser (γόης) named Peregrinus.[127] According to the account, some of Peregrinus' premier exploits included patricide, adultery, and pederasty. He also beguiled the Christians into supporting him while he was in prison. Much money (πολλὰ χρήματα) came to Peregrinus, Lucian relates, so that he acquired not a little (οὐ μικρά) revenue from it and lived in prosperity, despite being a fugitive (φυγή) on account of his crimes.[128] After a few other stops, Peregrinus came to Rome. But he was so belligerent in

[125] Lucian, *Runaways* 16.
[126] Lucian, *Runaways* 17.
[127] Lucian, *Peregrinus* 13.
[128] Lucian, *Peregrinus* 10, 13, 16, 20.

his Cynicism that he was brought before the city prefect (ὁ τὴν πόλιν ἐπιτετραμμένος) who kicked him out of Rome.[129] The denouement of the story is when Peregrinus eventually commits 'suicide' at the Olympic games by throwing himself on a pyre, albeit less than enthusiastically.

Thus, both at the level of plot and descriptive vocabulary the author of the *Refutation* and Lucian are in parallel. Indeed, the two authors use identical terms (γόης; χρῆμα; τραπέζα; δραπέτης; φυγή; ὀρθῶς) and even synonymous phrases. Callistus was entrusted with χρῆμα οὐκ ὀλίγον and made away with χρήματα πολλά while Peregrinus received πολλὰ χρήματα and procured πρόσοδον οὐ μικράν. Both authors also level similar charges against their respective opponents including thievery, greed, dishonesty, sexual deviancy (*Haer*. 9.12.20; *Peregrinus* 14, 17), and hoodwinking Christians out of money. Equally important, both authors are concerned with 'orthodoxy' (ὀρθῶς; *Hear*. 9.12.15), false teachers and their followers (*Haer*. 9.12.24 *Peregr*. 24).[130] Finally, to discredit the views of their opponents they both pointed up their opponents' slavishness.

All of these parallels should give us pause. The story about Callistus goes beyond just a little bias by the Roman polemicist. It raises instead serious suspicions about the historical credibility of the author's description. Casting Callistus as a slave, after all, allowed the author to really sling some mud. Such a portrayal would directly question Callistus' morality since Roman slave ideology already constructed the slave as morally

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[129] Lucian, *Peregrinus* 18.

[130] A similar method of assimilating to a philosophical model to disenfranchise claimants appears in Justin Martyr *Apol*. 26.6; *II Apol*. 7.3; 13.1-4 (Lieu 2004: 258).

deficient and dishonored.[131] But the account's utter conventionality shows the portrayal of Callistus as a slave was certainly an artifice, it not entirely artificial; it was *literary*, more than social, description.[132] Taking a page from Lucian, moreover, the author's methods and aims were not truth, but the characteristic exagerations of satire.[133] "If any charlatan (γόης) and trickster, able to profit (χρῆσθαι) by occasions comes among the Christians," Lucian says, "he quickly acquires sudden wealth."[134] Callistus was thus an archetype character of Second Sophistic satire.

In light the rhetoric we should also take a more critical look at Carpophorus and "Caesar's household." As I mentioned in the previous chapter, by calling him a "faithful man" (ἀνήρ πιστὸς) the author was not necessarily identifying Carpophorus as a Christian.[135] We know this, among other reasons, because in the only other instances in the treatise in which the author of the *Refutation* uses πιστὸς ἀνήρ the phrase denotes *his opponents*.[136] So at the very least we have ambiguous language here.

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[131] Mouritsen 2011: 24. As recent studies of Roman slavery have discussed, the primary Roman axis of understanding slaves and freedpersons is one of gradated (dis)honor and morality (Meyer 2012/13: 244-5). See also Joshel 2011: 156.

[132] Harrill 2006: 83. Similar comments in Cerrato who suggests that the text may well be literary and deployed from a distance–that is, not from a permanent resident of Rome (2002: 104). Marcovich suggests that the work was composed after the death of Callistus (1986: 17, 40), though cp. Brent 1995: 287-9.

[133] Edwards 1989: 89

[134] *Peregrinus* 13.

[135] It is usually taken for granted that he was a Christian from "Caesar's household." See e.g. Harnack 1908: 47. Gonzalez 1990: 122. Without explanation Brent calls him simply "a Christian banker" (2009: 243). It has been suggested that Hippolytus also "originally had some connection with that vast 'Caesar's household' which from the first furnished so many Christians to the Roman Church" (Dix and Chadwick 1992 [1937]: xiii).

[136] The first relates to Simon Magus' explanation of the Pentateuch and a 'faithful man' beloved by the sorceress Circe (πιστὸς ἀνήρ; 6.16.2), while the second appears as part of Elchasai's advice about keeping the mysteries safe since not not all are "faithful men" (ἄνδρες πιστοί; 9.17.2).

Rather than understanding the designation of Carpophorus in a strictly religious sense, which has been the convention, we need to consider the other range the term πιστὸς carries such as genuine or trustworthy, i.e. worthy of credit.[137] This sense would square with the plot's premise, which pivots on money, profit, investment, and loss. It would also match the use of the term πιστοί throughout this section of the treatise. For example, after losing their money the brothers entreated Carpophorus for help saying that they thought they were investing (lit. placing a trust, πιστεύεσθαι) with Carpophorus when they really invested (πιστεύεσθαι) with Callistus (*Haer*. 9.12.6). Thus, Carpophorus as a man trustworthy with money is just the kind of characteristic that the author wants to highlight in contrast to the thief Callistus.

In this same exchange, furthermore, the author relates that Carpophous was εὐλαβής–a term that the editors of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1886) translated as 'devout' and has since stuck. The translation affirms the picture of Carpophorus as a Christian, but the religious overtone is again unnecessary. In the story, the brothers go to Carpophorus and plead with him to release Callistus from punishment because Callistus apparently had money laid away in credit. Carpophorus agrees to release Callistus, saying that "he could care less about his own property" (ἴδιος ἀφειδεῖν)–that is, his slave Callistus!–but was thinking about the deposits (παραθήκη). Carpophorus responds this way because he was "cautious" or "shrewd" (ὡς εὐλαβής) with money.[138] The biographer Plutarch (c. 46-120

[137] *LSJ* s.v. πιστός I.2-3 and II (p. 1408).
[138] *LSJ* s.v. εὐλαβής II (p.720). The primary meaning of the term is holding fast, or clinging, see I.

CE) described the Athenian ruler Peisistratos in a similar way, saying he was a cautious and order-loving man (ὡς εὐλαβὴς καὶ κόσμιος ἀνὴρ).[139] And in his *Timon* Lucian also uses the term εὐλαβής precisely in the context of money. He contrasts wealth, which he says is elusive, with poverty, which he says is clinging (εὐλαβής).[140] So both terms the author uses (πιστὸς and εὐλαβής) are not inevitable Christian designations for Carpophorus. They are also economic ones that show the dissimilarity of Carpophorus and Callistus.

Moreover, when the author constructed his history of Carpopohrus and Callistus there was already a 'positive' tradition about Caesar's household within Christian discourse. The stories about the apostle Paul's experience with Caesar's household in Rome were blossoming just as the *Refutation* appeared. The author does not challenge this 'positive' tradition about Caesar's household connected to an apostolic past; he uses it as a contrast to Callistus who is not a member of Caesar's household, merely a domestic slave and fraud of one of its members. In other words, the effect was to move Callistus outside of a perceived 'orthodox' tradition that drew a direct line to the apostle Paul.

By all indications, the author knew about Paul and Caesar's household. What is

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[139] Plutarch, *Solon* 29.4.

[140] Timon was a man who became impoverished because he generously gave money to his 'friends' who only took advantage of his largesse. The gods look down at Timon who is languishing way, and Zeus orders Hermes to go to Timon along with the gods Wealth (Πλοῦτος) and Treasure (Θησαυρός). As they are making preparations Hermes reflects to Wealth: "What a smooth, slippery, unstable, evasive fellow you are, Wealth (Πλοῦτε)! There is no getting a firm hold of you; you wriggle through one's fingers somehow, like an eel or a snake. Poverty (Πενία) is so different–sticky, clinging (εὐλαβὴς), all over hooks; any one who comes near her is caught directly, and finds it no simple matter to get clear" (Lucian, *Tim*. 29).

significant here is that the Greek phrase used to describe Carpopohorus as a faithful man "from Caesar's household" (ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας) is quite rare in general, but appears in only two other early Christian texts: it appears several times in the *Martyrdom of Paul* and once in Paul's letter to the Philippians (4:22). The author of the *Refutation* uses *exactly* the same Greek phrase as these two texts, though the author parallels even more closely the *Martrydom of Paul* since the word πίστος is also used in conjunction with Καίσαρος οἰκία, rather than "saints" (ἅγιοι) as Paul did. This verbatim quotation should not be surprising. It attests to the widespread impact of the story of Paul's Martyrom.[141] "Caesar's household" is also the essential narratological piece of Paul's martyrdom, as we now have it. So the author must have been aware that he was using the same phrase from the *Martyrdom of Paul* or Phil 4:22 in his account of Caropophorus and Callistus.[142]

By strategically deploying the phrase "Caesar's household," the author of the *Refutation* was not claiming, like some modern interpreters, that Christians had

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[141] The Hippolytus to whom biblical commentaries are attributed knows some key details found only in what we call the *Martyrdom of Paul*. Cerrato 2002: 169-70. In his *Commentary on Daniel* (c.204 CE), for example, he writes: "[God] delivered Paul from many dangers, because he willed. And after a time, when he willed, he handed him over to be beheaded" (Hippolytus, *Dan*. 2.36.4). Παῦλον ἐρρύσατο ἐκ κινδύνων πολλῶν ἐπεὶ ἠθέλησεν· παρέλαβεν αὐτὸν ἀποκεφαλισθέντα μετὰ χρόνον, καὶ τοῦτον ὅτε ἠθέλησεν. The detail of Paul's beheading (τραχηλοκοπεῖν and ἀπετμήθη ἡ κεφαλή) is tied directly with Caesar and occurs several times in the martyrdom (*Mart. Paul* 3, 4, and 5). Ignatius and Irenaeus connect Paul with Rome but do not mention his martyrdom there or his beheading (Eastman 2011: 19, n.10 and 20). Paul is the dominant apostolic figure in the biblical commentaries attributed to Hippolytus and he represents a community that apparently accepted so-called 'apocryphal' stories from what is now called the *Acts of Paul*. In his commentary on Daniel (*Comm. Dan*. 3:29) Hippolytus mentions Paul and the lion as if it is well-known and accepted. See Snyder 2013: 226-7. Elliott 2005: 350.Hippolytus names or alludes to Paul about forty-one times, in contrast to Peter who is named three times (Cerrato 2002: 161, 168).

[142] The image of Paul stands closely behind the *Refutation*'s attack of Callistus. Not surprisingly, for example, like other heresiologists the author takes language directly from Paul's letters to categorize his opponents. But specifically, he twice calls Callistus a knave (πανοῦργος)–the exact same word Paul uses in 2 Cor 11:3 to decry what he calls "false apostles" (ψευδαπόστολοι).

penetrated the imperial palace. He was trying to portray Carpophorus in a certain comparative light. This portrayal would suit an audience that knew the stories about Paul's martyrdom or the ending of Philippians, both of which highlight "Caesar's household." So however the author intended to cast Carpophorus–as a Christian, a sympathizer, or merely an outlier–claiming that he was from "Caesar's household" and that he had regular interactions with the 'brethren' afforded some apostolic capital to his particular Christian 'faction' in Rome. For what it's worth, the early church historian Eusebius–who is the first person to attribute writings to a person named Hippolytus–never mentions a Carpophorus, or that Callistus was a slave of someone in Caesar's household.[143]

Two other characters in the *Refutation* deserve attention. Both Marcia and Hyacinth had ties to the imperial palace according to the author, and is likely that Marcia and Hyacinth were imperial slaves or freedpersons.[144] There is a tradition that Marcia, a mistress or concubine (παλλακή) of the emperor Commodus, was a Christian.[145] The

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[143] See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.20-22.

[144] For summary of this portion of the account see Appendix no. 3. Lightman and Lightman 2000: 157 suggest Marcia was probably a freedwoman of the co-emperor Lucius Verus. The word θρέψας (from τρέφειν) used to describe how Hyacinth raised Marcia is related to the term θρεπτός (*verna* in Latin)–a term for slaves who are bred in the house and/or adopted as foundlings. See e.g. *Hermas* I.1. The identification of the *Refutation*'s Marcia with the Marcia from the Agnani inscription is too much of a stretch. The identification is based on two factors: (1) one of the inscriptions (*CIL* 10.5918) mentions the name Marcia, who is taken to be either the daughter or the wife of the imperial freedman mentioned in *CIL* 10.5917; and (2) the inscriptions date to the late second century and would thus be contemporaneous with Commodus and the Marcia known from the *Refutation*, Dio Cassius, and Herodian. It seems more likely to me that there happened to be more than one imperial women in the time of Commodus who had the name Marcia. Imperial slave eunuchs were also quite common throughout the imperial period, as we saw earlier with Domitian's eunuch Earinus. For a second-century imperial freedman eunuch see *CIL* 6.8954.

[145] Döllinger calls her a "zealous Christian" (1876: 173). More recently, Green 2010: 135. In his well-known book Rodney Stark assumes she was a Christian who "failed to secure the conversion of

author says she summoned bishop Victor, asked what martyrs were in Sardinia, and secured a letter of manumission from Commodus, then handed it over to Hyacinth. The idea that she was a Christian also appears to be bolstered by the Roman historian Dio Cassius who comments that she "greatly favored the Christians and rendered them many kindnesses"[146] It has even been suggested, based on a pair of inscriptions from Agnani, Italy, that Marcia was an imperial freedwoman and the daughter of an imperial freedman.[147] A similar mythos has developed about Hyacinth. According to the *Refutation* he was an elderly eunuch (σπάδος ὄντος πρεσβύτερος) who brought the letter of manumission to Sardinia to release several martyrs (μάρτυρες).[148] Left unexplained in this rather obscure account is how a letter of manumission, even from the emperor, might secure the release of a condemned prisoner (or a martyr).

But caution is in order. The author of the *Refutation* was writing the account after the fact. That is, the author was (re)constructing the memory of Marcia and Hyacinth in his present situation for his own purposes. So, for example, it was the eleventh-century epitomator of Dio Cassius named Xiphilinos who was responsible for the line about

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Commodus" (Stark 1996: 99). Jones 1980: 1041 calls her a "Christian mistress." This folklore has entered the popular ranks as well. The recent New York Times Bestseller and award-winning book by Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, states simply "she was a Christian" (MacCulloch 2010: 167).

[146] Dio Cassius, *Hist. rom.* 73.4.7 (αὕτη πολλά τε ὑπὲρ τῶν Χριστιανῶν σπουδάσαι καὶ πολλὰ αὐτοὺς εὐηργετηκέναι).

[147] Strong 2014: 242 citing *CIL* 10.5917 and *CIL* 10.5918.

[148] Several scholars have labeled him a "Christian presbyter" who was either an imperial slave or freedman of Commodus. See Döllinger 1876: 112; likewise Lampe who claims Hyacinth, a "Christian of the imperial household," "not only remained unmolested as a Christian but actually exercised a certain amount of influence there, even carried on 'diplomacy' for the Roman Christians" (2003: 336). W.H.C. Frend even claimed he was a eunuch "priest" (Frend 2014: 318).

Marcia *favoring* Christians.[149] This was long after Marcia had taken root in Christian memory. Other Roman sources such as Dio Cassius and Herodian that mention Marcia provide some racy details–including how she murdered Commodus–but say nothing about her apparent Christian connections.[150] That she was clearly the emperor's sexual partner, even if a slave, raises further questions about her supposed Christian affiliations.

The author never suggests that Marcia is a Christian, only that she was a φιλόθεος who desired to do a good deed.[151] This indicates, from the author's perspective, that her standing with a Christian community was much more casual, indeed derivative. As Lampe has rightly suspected, if we read between the lines the account, the bridge between Christians and the court was not Marcia but the eunuch Hyacinth.[152] He appears to have set up some kind of introduction so that (he and) Victor could ask Marcia to help them get a release for certain prisoners. The fact that she was apparently able to request and secure the release–what must originally have been a favor for her *de facto* foster father Hyacinth–also meant that she was later remembered as a 'god-lover' who had done a good deed. And despite attempts to claim Hyacinth as an influential 'presbyter' of the church he was more likely just an elderly man (πρεσβύτερος) with some connection to a Christian group in Rome. His participation within that Christian community, not to mention his personal 'belief,' is unknown. The author says nothing about it. Hyacinth's "influence" was also not with the imperial court but with Marcia, the emperor's

[149] Strong 2014: 240. Contra Lampe 2003: 336, n.15.
[150] Strong 2014: 240. Herodian 1.17.7-9.
[151] Lampe 2003: 336.
[152] Lampe 2003: 336.

concubine turned assassin.

We should keep in mind the cosmological world of the original audience(s), as well. Carpophorus, Marcia, and Hyacinth were under the wing of a god. Marcia was sleeping with him. It is well known that Commodus did not wait for posthumous senatorial approval to become a *divus*, but pursued that divinity while still alive. He famously adopted as his alter ego the god Hercules–the last of a long line of gods that Commodus linked with himself during his reign. He was also the first emperor to adopt the title "the undefeated one" (*invictus*), suggesting he drew his authority directly from the god Mithra.[153] So we have every reason to believe that Commodus' palace personnel–which could include Carpophorus, Marcia, and Hyacinth–participated in the daily rituals (e.g. burning incense before an the *lares* and the master's *genius*) and regular civic festivals that would 'honor' the Roman gods, including the Commodus himself.[154]

The reality that the *Refutation* relates is that there probably were imperial personnel who in various ways were connected to Christians in Rome in the late-Antonine period. But reading the narrative critically it is also clear that those in the imperial household had a much more ambiguous 'Christian' identity than many have allowed.[155] This is the crucial point. It did not matter to the author whether Carpophorus or Callistus was a Christian as much as it mattered that he could convincingly shape their

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[153] Toner 2014: 26-7.

[154] Pfeiffer 2012: 84. On Christian emperor worship see Rebillard 2012: 28, more generally 25-31. Also Green notes the ability of Christians "to pass unnoticed indicates the degree of accommodation that they had contrived with the society around them" (2010: 126).

[155] As Judith Lieu notes, apologetic texts strive to control possession or application of the label 'Christian,' even while admitting the impossibility of securing any ultimate means of control (2004: 258).

connection to Caesar's household for his polemical project.[156]

APOLOGETICS IN NORTH AFRICA: THE PALACE, PROCLUS, AND CHRISTIAN MILK

While 'Hippolytus' was composing his polemical work on certain 'heretics' in Rome, the North African Christian named Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (c. 160-220 CE), or Tertullian for short, was also busy writing.[157] In 197 CE Tertullian published a lengthy *Apology* in response to a recent persecution of Christians.[158] Among an array of arguments defending Christians and attacking the Romans' treatment of them, Tertullian argues that Christians fill the imperial palace in Rome. The revelatory point is part of a broader claim that Christians are a global entity. That is, as he presents his case before an assumed audience of Roman magistrates, Tertullian foregrounds the number of Christians in the world. He argues that since there are so many Christians in the world persecution is counter-productive and futile. If all the Christians, such a mass of people (*tanta vis hominum*), broke off to a remote part of the world, Tertullian warns, the loss of so many

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[156] The comment of Marcovich is apt here, even if showing anachronisms: "the main objective of the *Philosophumena* (Books 1-IV), which is presented as the author's own research on the Gnostic scriptures, was to impress the audience–to show its author as a knowledgeable and learned writer–in the eyes of his Roman congregation, the empress Julia Mamaea, the matron Severina, and in contrast to the ἀγράμματος pope Zephyrinus or the ex-slave Pope Callistus" (1986: 36).

[157] On Tertullian's personal history see Wilhite 2007: 17-24; Dunn 2004; for a larger arc of discussion see Barnes 1971: 3-29, 57-9.

[158] *Apol*. 1.1. The *Apology* dates to 197 CE because it refers to the recent campaign of Septimius Severus against the Parthians (37.4). For the more traditional discussion Tertullian's writings vis-à-vis Roman persecution see Rankin 1995: 10-16.

citizens (*tot qualiumcumque civium*) would result in sheer destitution (*desitutione*), silence (*silentium*), and a dead globe (*mortui orbis*).[159]

This sense of a global identity is one Tertullian shares with other early Christian writers.[160] And as if reiterating Paul's speech to the emperor Nero in the *Martyrdom of Paul*, Tertullian sneers:

> Oh, sure, the Mauritanians, the Marcomanni, and the Parthians–or other races, however great, of but one region with their own borders–are more numerous than the whole world! We are only recent, and we have filled everything you have–cities, blocks, forts, towns, market-places, camps, tribes, town councils, palace, senate, forum. We have left you only the temples.[161]

Tertullian compares recognizable ethnic groups who have definable territories with Christians–a race that covers the whole world (*gentes totius orbis*) and has no borders. Paradoxically, though, Tertullian claims that Christians fill particular spaces including the imperial palace in Rome (*palatium*). The apologist is not so delusional to think that literally every person serving in the emperor Severus' palace is a Christian. Rather, because the palace was at the epicenter of hegemony, imagining a Christian(s) serving in the emperor's household redefined the spatial field and the geographical boundaries of the community as a whole. Like other early Christian writers, moreover, Tertullian was territorial. Locating Christians in particular places of the world was a serious geo-

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[159] *Apol*. 37.6-7.

[160] Lieu 2004: 235.

[161] My translation. Plures nimirum Mauri et Marcomanni ipsique Parthi, vel quantaecunque unius tamen loci et suorum finium gentes quam totius orbis. Hesterni sumus, et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum forum; sola vobis relinquimus temple (*Apol*. 37.4). Text from Glover 1931.

political exercise.[162] So it is quite a statement that Tertullian annexes the entire palace to Christian territory.[163] Not until fifteen years later does Tertullian give any face to this claim.

His open letter apology *To Scapula*, which shares several arguments with his earlier *Apology*,[164] Tertullian penned in 212 CE for the proconsul of Africa Proconsularis. Apparently, it had been an ominous year. Droughts, fires on Carthage's walls, and a solar eclipse made the proconsul Scapula[165] start trying and torturing Christians. Out of concern for the proconsul, "for all our enemies, not to mention our friends," and to explain who the Christians are and what their discipline (*disciplina*) is Tertullian sent a petition (*libellus*) to Scapula.[166] The comparatively brief letter tries to combat the usual suspicions that Christians are treasonous,[167] sacrilegious (*sacrilegium*),[168] incestuous,[169] and refuse to sacrifice or swear by the emperor's *genius*.[170] Tertullian argues that all of

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[162] Geographical knowledge, space, and imperial power were imbricated. There was power in knowing–and in Tertullian's case, publicizing–one's place in the *oikoumene* (Nasrallah 2005: 284-5).
[163] Lieu 2004: 237.
[164] The two are so similar in fact that some have thought the letter is a précis of the longer apology (Barnes 1971: 45, 166). Geoffrey Dunn, on the other hand, suggests that the two are related but distinct. Unlike the *Apologeticus*, which is a forensic piece of writing arguing for Christian innocence, *Ad Scapulam*, written decade and a half later, goes further to advocate the dismantling of the Roman religious policy of intolerance towards Christians (2002: 55). Dunn categorizes *Ad Scapulam* as deliberative oratory, raising hope or alarm in the audience, and a course of action could be recommended through what was expedient or honorable (2002: 51).
[165] There has been debate about which Scapula this was, P. Julius Scapula Tertullus Priscus, *cos*. 195 CE, of his cousin C. Julius (Scapula) Lepidus Tertullus, consul between 195 and 197 CE (Dunn 2004: 165, n.7). For discussion see Barnes 1986: 202, n.8 and Birley 1992: 53. The latter Scapula seems to be the one favored by scholars (Rebillard 2012: 41).
[166] Tertullian, *Scap*. 1.2-4.
[167] *Scap*. 2.5 and 4.8
[168] *Scap*. 2.4.
[169] *Scap*. 4.7,
[170] *Scap*. 2.5-9.

these charges are false. Christians are loyal to the emperor–paying him reverential homage (*colere*) to him, sacrificing and praying for the emperor's safety, health, and wellbeing (*pro salute*).[171] So it is counterproductive to persecute them since they are innocent, peaceful, and beneficial for Carthage. Then, reminding the proconsul of the official precedents, Tertullian exclaims:

> Even Severus himself, the father of Antoninus [Caracalla], was mindful (*memor fuit*) of the Christians; for he sought out the Christian Proculus, surnamed Torpacion, the steward of Euhodia, who once cured him by anointing, and he kept him in his palace until the day of his death. Antoninus, too, brought up as he was on Christian milk, had known him well.[172]

For those combing through the primary sources to find Christians in the imperial household this passage seems to offer two more examples.[173] Torpacion was evidently the former manager for the household of a certain Euhodia (*Euhodiae procuratorem*) and was probably a freedman in that household.[174] It is not clear what occasioned Torpacion's access to treat Severus. Nor is it clear what circumstances brought him into the palace, though Lampe hints that Severus may have purchased Proculus from Euhodia for the

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[171] *Scap*. 2.5-8.

[172] *Scap*. 4.5. Italics mine. English translation adapted from Thewall in *ANF* vol. 3 (1885). Latin text: Ipse etiam Seuerus, pater Antonini, Christianorum memor fuit. Nam et Proculum Christianum qui Torpacion cognominabatur, Euhodiae procuratorem, qui eum per oleum aliquando curaverat, requisiuit et in palatio suo habuit usque ad mortem eius; quem et Antoninus optime noverat, lacte Christiano educatus. Text from Dekkers et al 1954: 1125-1132.

[173] Barnes links Torpacion with the imperial freedman Marcus Aurelius Prosenes relating that "Christians were already intruding themselves into positions of secret power and influence at the imperial court (1971: 69).

[174] Barnes emphasizes that the correct reading should be Euhodos, that is, the tutor of the emperor Caracalla (Dio Cassius *Hist. rom*. 76.2; Barnes 1971: 70, n.3). In that case Torpacion would have already had ties to the imperial household.

imperial household.[175] Whatever the case, Tertullian relates that Torpacion was a Christian physiotherapist on Severus' permanent staff and the then-current emperor Caracalla had known Torpaciaon well.[176]

Based on Tertullian's anecdote many have thought that besides Torpacion, Caracalla also had a wet-nurse who was a Christian slave woman.[177] This is inferred from the phrase "brought up on Christian milk" (*lacte Christiano educatus*). Caracalla's wet-nurse would have come from the "strong Christian community at Lugdunum" (Lyon) where Caracalla was born in 186 CE while Severus was the provincial governor. And since many of Lugdunum's Christians had emigrated from Asia Minor, this wet-nurse is "likely to have been an immigrant Greek, perhaps even from Syria."[178] This Greek-speaking woman from the East, the reasoning goes, would have thus attracted the interest or curiosity of Caracalla's mother, the future empress Julia Domna. When Caracalla's younger brother Geta was born in Rome in 189 CE the Christian wet-nurse would also have sojourned there, and after Severus was proclaimed emperor in 193 she probably numbered among the imperial family.[179]

There has even been speculation that this wet-nurse had a Christian son. According to the fourth-century *Historia Augusta*, as a boy Caracalla had a playmate who

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[175] Lampe 2003: 337.
[176] Levick 2007: 31.
[177] Oden 2011: 115; Kebric 2005: 258; Lampe 2003: 337; McKechnie 2000: 142 and 1999: 428; Grant 1996: 80, n.18; Rankin 1995: 23; Kyrtatas 1987: 81; Harnack 1908: 48.
[178] Birley 1971: 125. In the secondary editions of his book Birley excises the piece about Caracalla's Christian wet-nurse.
[179] Lampe 2003: 337.

was Jewish.[180] Lampe construes this obscure biographical nugget thusly: Jews and Christians could still be confused by pagans, therefore the 'Jewish boy' could have been the Christian son of Caracalla's wet-nurse.[181] So Caracalla, it would appear, "had a personal relationship with at least three Christians," Lampe says, including his wet-nurse, his chamberlain Marcus Aurelius Prosenes, and Proculus.[182] If the Jewish boy was really a Christian the number would be four, one must suppose.

Tally aside, the idea that Caracalla had a Christian wet-nurse–and the other undergrowth around it–is a mistake.[183] To get technical for a moment, several manuscripts of Tertullian's text read *lacte Christiano educatus*, which would indicate that the one "brought up" (*educatus*) on Christian milk was Caracalla. This has been the conventional reading.[184] But to make sense of what Tertullian means scholars have interpreted the phrase as Tertullian's roundabout way of saying that Caracalla had a Christian wet-nurse. This is a stretch. Notably, and notwithstanding Tertullian's penchant for playing on words, he doesn't use the standard term for wet-nurse (*nutrix*).[185] That is not his claim, anyway. Instead he uses "milk" (*lac*; Gk. γάλα) metaphorically to mean

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[180] *Historia Augusta, Caracalla* 1.6: septennis puer, cum conlusorem suum puerum ob Iudaicam religionem gravius verberatum audisset, neque patrem suum neque patrem pueri velut auctores verberum diu respexit.
[181] Lampe 2003: 337, n.16. Also Quacquarelli 1957: 111.
[182] Lampe 2003: 337.
[183] Levick 2007: 31and n.68.
[184] So Quacquarelli 1957: 111. For some discussion of the manuscript traditions and the critical editions of *Ad Scapulam* see Waszink 1959. There are "vast disagreements" among the editions of the text (Groh 1976: 43).
[185] See e.g. the imperial freedwomen in *CIL* 6.4352; CIL 6.20042. Also, *CIL* 6.14558; *CIL* 6.16470; *CIL* 6.20433.

Christian teaching– a common idiom in early Christian writings.[186] In this manuscript tradition, then, one interpretation would be that because Caracalla knew Torpacion well Caracalla was, by osmosis, also brought up on Christian doctrine.[187] However, another manuscript of the text (N) reads *lacte Christiano educatum*, which would indicate that the one "brought up" (*educatum*) on Christian milk was actually Torpacion.[188] More recently scholars have preferred this manuscript reading as the more intelligible.[189] From this reading Tertullian would mean that Caracalla knew Torpacion had been a Christian from birth.[190] In either case, there is no wet-nurse, only Torpacion and Christian 'milk' in the imperial palace.

Indeed, within his apology Torpacion's presence in Caesar's household represents one of Tertullian's strongest pleas for tolerance. The North African tries to cut to the bone by arguing that the emperor Severus himself–the principal magistrate and "the human being next to God"–was mindful of Christians.[191] The chief evidence, according to Tertullian, is the emperor's treatment of Torpacion. By extension, Tertullian argues, the reigning emperor Caracalla, having been exposed to Christian milk, is also

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[186] Clement (*Strom* 1.11.53.3), for example, uses Hebrews 5:13 to describe new converts as milk-fed infants (Eshleman 2012: 104). See also 1 Peter 2:2-3; 1 Cor 3:2. More generally, see *TLL* 7.2 s.v. *lac* C2b (p.818).
[187] Thus Instinsky 1963: 75 and n.73.
[188] Siglum N is the 15th century Florence MS, Codex Florentinus BNC Conventi soppressi J.6. 9.
[189] Birley 2005: 258, n.22; also Birley 1992: 54, n.131. Levick 2007: 31 take *educatum* as the more authoritative reading. This reading would match the clause that begins with the accusative pronoun *quem* and clearly refers to Torpacion. See Bulhart's 1957 edition p. 14 and n.30.
[190] Levick 2007: 31.
[191] Tertullian evidently had a positive attitude to Severus whom he calls *constantissimus* in *Apol*. 4.8 (Birley 2005: 258).

forbearing.[192] To mistreat Christians, Tertullian thus suggests, is to contradict the emperors and ignore that Christians are in fact loyal to the emperor.

How Tertullian knew that the former emperor's personal medic was a Christian is itself a meaningful historical question. Assuming Tertullian did not create the anecdote out of whole cloth, he must have heard it from someone–unless he knew Torpacion himself. One possibility is that Torpacion was a native of or had lived in Carthage and was once active in the Christian community there. This would make sense of Tertullian's use of *educatum* to mean that Torpacion was brought up on Christian milk. On the other hand, it is also possible that Torpacion accompanied Severus in 202 CE when the emperor visited *Africa Proconsularis* on an imperial *adventus* with Julia and their two sons, Caracalla and Geta.[193] As part of no doubt an extensive retinue, this could have been an occasion for Torpacion to connect with a local Christian community. We will probably never know the answer.[194]

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[192] Rankin says that Tertullian employs the good emperor-bad emperor motif at *ad Scapulam* 4.5 when he makes the improbable claim that Septimius Severus himself was attentive to Christians (2006: 60). Even if Severus alleged mindfulness is exaggerated, this is not totally tongue-in-cheek apologetic manipulation. Although some persecution was clearly taking place at intervals, on a local basis, throughout the years when Tertullian wrote, there is no good evidence for Septimius Severus decreeing an empire-wide persecution. The 'edict' known only from the *Historia Augusta, Severus* 17.1, Severus' alleged ban on conversion to Judaism and Christianity, in a context that should be in the period ca. 199-202, is surely an invention by the the author of the *Historia Augusta*, although it is often taken to be genuine (Birley 2005: 257). Likewise, Dunn 2004: 17; Rives 1996: 19. Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 6.1.1) only discusses events in Alexandria, which may more plausibly be explained as a local persecution. The martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas (203 CE) occurred while the Setpimius Severus was in Africa, possibly at Lepcis (Birley 1988: 153-4). See also Tertullian, *Apol.* 35.9. He also writes in his letter to Scapula that "Both women and men of highest rank, whom Severus knew well to be Christians, were not merely permitted by him to remain uninjured; but he even bore distinguished testimony in their favor, and gave them publicly back to us from the hands of a raging populace" (4.6).

[193] Birley 1992: 45-6.

[194] Some scholars have entertained the idea that "Christianity reached Africa" with members of the imperial household, a great many of whom worked there (Birley 2005: 250). For discussion and

What is transparent, though, is that Tertullian summons what we might call a supra-local cultural memory of Torpacion.[195] I mean by 'cultural' that Tertullian must have shared the memory of Torpacion with a Christian group living in North Africa.[196] This group Tertullian considers to be part of a race (*gens*) that is both like and unlike others in the world. By supra-local I mean that at a crucial political moment in his community Tertullian appropriated the past (Torpacion) by looking to the imperial palace in Rome.[197] Torpacion was the spatio-temporal bridge allowing Tertullian to move from provincial periphery to imperial center and back again. Remembering Torpacion, moreover, was an ideological appropriation of the past.[198] By moving back and forth from periphery to center Tertullian tried to bring what he considered to be a weighty

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bibliography of the evidence see Vössing 1997: 413-18; Schöllgen 1984: 104-9. In the late-nineteenth century a collection of over 800 inscriptions (epitaphs) of imperial slaves and freedpersons was recovered from a burial-ground near Carthage's amphitheater (sometimes called the *sepulcretum familia Caesaris*), an area in use from about 70-170 CE. I. M. Barton tried to find "traces of Christianity" in these epitaphs by looking for names, symbols, or formulas that have specifically Christian significance. He also discussed the inscriptions in light of Paul's "reference to the Christians of 'Caesar's household' at Rome (Barton 1972: 22). The inscriptions are the basis for the idea that North Africa's Christian origins are related to Caesar's household. Despite the fact that the funerary inscriptions "all appear to be pagan," the rationalization is that at this period overt assertion of Christianity on a tombstone would have been highly unusual (Birley 2005: 250, n. 7). So the idea of Caesar's household carrying Christianity to Africa from Rome survived. See comments of Kyrtatas 1987: 78. For discussion of Christian origins in Africa coming from either Rome or the East see Rives 1995: 224-6 and Wilhite 2007: 31-2.

[195] I adapted this idea from discussions of memory and 'translocal' in Brickell and Datta 2011 and Chamberlain and Leydesdorf 2004.

[196] Memories are always mediated. Chamberlain and Leydesdorf 2004: 229; Halbwachs 1980; Kirk 2005: 2-5.

[197] Spatio-temporal frameworks are crucial, for it is not possible to remember apart from memories fastening to definite places and times (Kirk 2005: 2; Halbwachs 1980: 143-40).

[198] Kirk 2005: 12.

piece of Christian cultural 'history' to bear on the current sociopolitical and ideological structures of Roman North Africa.[199]

Tertullian says nothing about Torpacion's political influence, his social status, or his economic potential as a member of Caesar's household.[200] Only in the following sentence does Tertullian point up that some most illustrious women and men (*clarissimas feminas et clarissimos viros*) Severus knew to be Christians.[201] The basis of Tertullian is Torpacion's *spatial* proximity to the imperial power-center. Like we saw with memories of Paul and Caesar's household in the *Martyrdom of Paul*, the image of a Christian so close to the emperor breaks and then reframes the perceived boundaries of cultural space.[202] Torpacion was consequently a figurehead who symbolized a new 'spatial imaginary.' Within the apology this member of Caesar's household opened representational space for Christian voices from North Africa to enter to the cultural record as legitimate people of the Roman Empire.[203]

In addition to highlighting Christians in the palace and retrieving Torpacion to manufacture political and cultural cachet, the apologies tap into a wider Christian

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[199] As Doreen Massey observes, it is not just that space is political, but thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated, can contribute to political arguments already under way, and can be an essential element in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political (2005: 9)

[200] Contra Barnes 1971: 69-70.

[201] Sed et clarissimas feminas et clarissimos uiros Seuerus, sciens huius sectae esse, non modo non laesit, uerum et testimonio exornauit, et populo furenti in nos palam restitit (*Scap*. 4.6). But as Groh points out, "[to] cite this passage by itself as an objective example of the entry of the upper-classes into the church (albeit an exaggeration) simply will not do" and "Tertullian's people are more 'types' than persons" (1976: 43, 46).

[202] Perkins 2009: 117

[203] Perkins 2009: 127. As Kirk writes, "the past is retrieved and interpreted in a community's incessant activity of self-constitution" (2005: 11).

tradition about believers in the imperial palace. The tradition was rooted in memories of Paul's martyrdom in Rome–memories that were circulating precisely when Tertullian was writing. Like his Roman contemporary, the Tertullian knew the *Martyrdom of Paul* in one form or another,[204] and he appears to draw from it in the *Apology*. For example, Tertullian's claim that Christians fill the palace (*palatium*) is also a central theme in the *Martyrdom of Paul* (e.g. πλῆθος πολύ), one that prompts Nero to issue an edict that all those found to be Christians should be killed. The fact that Tertullian uses the word 'palace,' which appears at a turning point in Paul's martyrdom story, is equally telling. The reader will recall that Nero was killing so many Christians that finally the Romans protested in front of "the palace" (τό παλάτιον) crying out "Enough is enough, Caesar, for these people are ours! You are destroying the power of the Romans." The palace scene leads Nero to relent his killing spree and establish the more restrained policy that none of the Christians should be killed without due process.[205]

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[204] Apart from his knowledge of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (*Bapt*. 17.5) we know from his other writings that Tertullian remembers a Paul who was martyred in Rome by beheading (*Praes*. 36; *Scorp*. 15). This detail points to information found only in what we have as the *Martyrdom of Paul*. Tertullian must have been hearing/reading a source(s) and by the turn of the third-century some form of the *Martyrdom pf Paul* must have been circulating in North Africa (Snyder 2013: 32-3). According to Richard Pervo, it is probable that Tertullian knew the entire *Acts of Paul* (Pervo 2014: 43), which would include Paul's climactic martyrdom in Rome. Other details besides the beheading that support this: Tertullian takes up the sort of military language vis-à-vis martyrdom that is featured in the *Martyrdom of Paul*. Christians are fit for war (*bello idonei*) and are "gladly butchered" (*libenter trucidamur*) *Apol*. 37.5. Tertullian warns Scapula if all the Christians–many thousands, of such a multitude of men and women, persons of every sex and every age and every rank (*quid facies de tantis milibus hominum, tot viris ac feminis, omnis sexus, omnis aetatis, omnis dignitatis, offerentibus se tibi*?)–presented themselves before Scapula for slaughter, Carthage would also be decimated (*decimata*), or literally, every tenth person would be picked off (*Scap*. 5.2). Tertullian also mentions Christians killed with fire and the coming day of judgment (*Apol*. 37.2 and *Scap*. 5.2; *Scap*. 2.3; 3.7). See the then *MartPaul* 4.

[205] *MartPaul* 3.

In both the *Martyrdom of Paul* and Tertullian's *Apology*, therefore, the palace is a "meeting space" for Christians to negotiate power and meaning in the political and cultural landscape.[206] The insiders who read the apologies may or may not have shared the outlook of their spokesman Tertullian, but the idea of Christians in the palace during the Severan period seems to have been a discernable thread in North African Christian memory and culture-making. Other Christian communities in the Empire spun similar tales.

SLAVE OF CAESAR TO SLAVE OF CHRIST: MARTYRDOM IN CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD

In one version of the martyrdom account of Justin Martyr of Rome (c. 100-165 CE) a "slave of Caesar" (δοῦλος Καίσαρος) named Euelpistus is martyred for Christ. Rome's urban prefect Quintus Junius Rusticus, known as a Stoic philosopher, friend and instructor of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, questions each suspect about the doctrines, the practices, where they meet, who their parents are and so on. In the course of Rusticus' interrogation he asks Euelpistus, a name meaning "a good hope": "'And what are you, Euelpistus?' Euelpistus, a slave of Caesar (δοῦλος Καίσαρος), answered: 'I too am a Christian, set free by Christ and I share in the same hope by the favor of Christ.'"[207] And

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[206] Language adapted from Tweed 1997: 136.

[207] *Ac. Justin* B 4.3. Ῥούστικος ἔπαρχος εἶπεν τῷ Εὐελπίστῳ· Σὺ δὲ τίς εἶ, Εὐέλπιστε; Εὐέλπιστος δοῦλος Καίσαρος ἀπεκρίνατο· Κἀγὼ Χριστιανός εἰμι, ἐλευθερωθεὶς ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ, καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐλπίδος μετέχω χάριτι Χριστοῦ (*Ac. Justin*, B.4.3; Musurillo 1972: 50).

so Justin and each of his companions confess Christ, each refuses to sacrifice to the gods, and each is summarily executed, thus leading to their status as "holy martyrs."[208]

Once again, several scholars taken the reference to a Christian imperial slave companion of Justin Martyr as an accurate social description from second-century Rome; however, in doing so they misunderstand the nature of the text.[209] The *Acts of Justin and Companions* is preserved in three distinct Greek recensions: A, B, and C.[210] The shorter version, also considered the earliest, is recension A. The best known and most used version of Justin's martyrdom is recension B, but as scholars now agree, this version derives from and thus postdates A. The longest and most theologically developed version, recension C, was composed long after the other two.[211] There are important differences between the three versions. For our discussion the crucial difference is that Euelpistus appears as one of the companions in the earliest version (recension A), yet it is only in the later recensions (B and C) that he is identified as an imperial slave.[212]

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[208] *Ac. Justin* B 6.1.

[209] See e.g. Novak 2001: 68; Kyrtatas 1987: 80; Lampe 2003: 351, n.2. He does, however, note some discussion about the recensions, though without changing his identification of Euelpistus (2003: 276). Bradley 2012: 122, and n.32. Bradley is at least aware of the textual recensions. Lane Fox 1987: 320. Frend 1967: 189, n.59. To endorse the historicity of the account further, Frend remarks that a "forger would hardly fabricate details" about Cappadocia, so overall this martyrdom account "illustrate[s] Roman imperial policy towards the Christians in the Antonine period." (Frend 1967: 191). See also Keresztes 1968: 321-41. This martyrdom account has often been culled for details about Christianity in second-century Rome. See e.g. Georges 2012, response Ulrich 2012.

[210] Moss 2012: 89.

[211] Mururillo 1972: xviii. Moss 2012: 89. For the scholarship on the *Acts of Justin* and these recensions see de' Cavalieri 1902a and b; Burkitt 1909; Lazzati 1953 and 1956: 119-127; Bisbee 1983; Barnes 1968.

[212] *Ac. Justin* A 4.3. See critical apparatus in de' Cavalieri 1902a: 35. Many treatments of the *Ac. Justin* do not mention Euelpistus as an imperial slave probably because they are using Recension A. See e.g. Grant 2003: 52. *Acts of Justin* Recension A is preserved in P=codex Parisinus graecus 1470 (c. 890 CE). Recension B is preserved in the eight-century manuscript C=codex Cantabrigiensis add. 4489, Cambridge University; for all three recensions of the text of the *Acts of Justin*, this is the oldest manuscript (Musurillo

Although it has been difficult to establish absolute dates for the recensions, there are telltale signs that suggest what we call Recension B was composed well after 250 CE, or even after 313. The opening mentions that "impious decrees (προστάγματα)" were posted against the Christians in town and country alike "to force them to offer libations to empty images (σπένδειν τοῖς ματαίοις εἰδώλοις)." This is why W. H. C. Frend issues suspicions comments on the "verisimilitude" and "forgery" of this account because as even he admits in a note, "we know nothing of 'impious decrees' being issued 'in town and country'" in the time of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE).[213] Frend wants to preserve the historical integrity of the martyrdom account, long thought to be the best example of an authentic Roman trial (*commentarius*) of Christians, by claiming that the opening "must obviously be attributed to a later, perhaps post-Constantinian, editor."[214] But this is not sufficient. Later in the text Rusticus passes judgment on those who "refused to sacrifice to the gods (θῦσαι τοῖς θεοῖς) and yield to the emperor's edict (πρόσταγμα)."[215] These two allusions point to a context after the emperor Decius decreed in 249 CE (or those decrees of Diocletian even later) that all inhabitants of the empire

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1972: xviii). Recension B is also preserved in H=codex Hierosolymitanus sancti Sepulchri 6 (9th-10th cent) and V=codex Vaticanus graecus 1667 (10th cent.) with a copy in codex Vaticanus graecus 665 (16th cent.). *Acts of Justin* Recension C is preserved in codex Hierosolymitanus sancti sepulchri 17 (12th cent.) and codex Vaticanus graecus 1991 (13th cent.). See Musurillo 1972: xix-xx. Significantly, in Burkitt's discussion of variations between H, V and C (i.e. the manuscripts for Recension B) he does *not* mention any variation on the reading δοῦλος Καίσαρος for Euelpistus (Burkitt 1909: 65).

[213] Frend 1967: 190, n.61.

[214] Frend 1967: 190, n.61. See Bisbee 1988: 95, 100.

[215] *Ac. Justin* B 5.8.

should *sacrifice to the gods*–an edict traditionally understood as the first ever empire-wide persecution of Christians.[216]

We know from Cyprian, Carthage's third-century bishop and an eye-witness to the events, that in many cases the Christian response to Decius' edict was–from his viewpoint–rather messy. Many Christians apparently rushed eagerly into the forum to offer sacrifice and to receive their certificate of completion (*libellus*). Some Christians offered incense as an equivalent, others bribed the magistrates to obtain a certificate. Still others compelled their dependents–their tenants and clients (*inquilinos vel amicos*)–to sacrifice.[217] On the other hand, Cyprian also distinguished between those who had certificates and those who had actually sacrificed. With more nuance and even sympathy he cites the various, complicated situations that could lead to acquiring a certificate: for example, the head of a household sacrificed to protect wife, family, and children.[218] At any rate, enough Christians wound up with certificates that Cyprian's church was evidently having to grant counter certificates of peace (*libellus pacis*), which would restore to communion those who had 'lapsed' by obeying the emperor's edict.[219]

Scholars have reconstructed the wording of Decius' edict from several ancient sources. The crucial line would be "That all men together with all women and members

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[216] So Moss 2012: 89, n.35. Giuseppe Lazzati suggested that recension B "è probabilmente del IV secolo" (1956: 119). For arguments against this dating see Bisbee 1988: 98-99.
[217] Cyprian, *Ep*. 55.13.2.
[218] Cyprian, *Ep*. 55.13.2.
[219] Descriptions taken from Brent 2010: 7, 212-13. But because of the vagueness of the certificates' wording–they were addressed to "this person and his household"–many others connected to that one household could also be restored to communion without actually having completed penitence. This bothered Cyprian, and he strongly advised some editing of the church's certificates (Cyprian, *Ep*. 15.4).

of the household (i.e., slaves–οἰκέται) and infants (or children) sacrifice and pour libations (θύειν καὶ σπένδειν), and accurately taste the same sacrificial meats."[220] The edict of the emperor Decius was not just a religious policy, however, nor was it issued to persecute Christians, as scholars now recognize. The purpose was to legitimize Decius' power. The 'religious' element was supposed to secure divine favor by restoring traditional Roman piety and uniting the empire in religious observance under Decius.[221] So tucked into Decius' demand for a formal rite of sacrifice was also a call for the whole population of the empire to prove its loyalty to him. Meanwhile, the edicts issued under Diocletian and Gallienus (284-303 CE) could lie in the background thus pushing the date of recension B even later.

If Cyprian's description of the situation in North Africa is any indication of how Christians elsewhere in the empire responded to the edict we may be safe in assuming that many–if not most– simply complied. This reality seems to lie behind much of the editorial activity in the *Acts of Justin* recension B. The editor of this version, Candida Moss has observed, sharpened the antagonism throughout the account by juxtaposing Christian piety (εὐσέβεια) with the prescribed piety towards the emperor. The terms of the debate in this text are thus the limits and specificity of piety and the narrator reworks Roman *pietas* into the exclusivity of Christian piety.[222] To a Roman administrator, Moss adds, it would not have been apparent why Christians could not show piety to both Christ

[220] See recent discussion in Luijendijk 2008: 172, generally 170-3.
[221] Manders 2012: 262; Bardill 2012: 75; Brent 2010: 123-8; Potter 2014 [2004]: 243. James Rives' cogent article was instrumental in revising the conventional wisdom about this edict (Rives 1999).
[222] Moss 2012: 91.

and the emperor, because Roman piety implied a network of social allegiances and duties. Displays of piety, which were not solely religious but encompassed all manner of social and identity-grounded responsibilities, reinforced social relations and regulated networks of power. By contrast, impiety resisted and transgressed the established social order.[223]

Given the historical context, the rhetorical objectives of recension B, and the stipulation that slaves also needed to sacrifice, the character Euelpistus is quite important.[224] Notably, Euelpistus is the only character in this martyrdom account whose recorded status in recension A changes in recension B.[225] In recension A he is Euelpistus; in B he is Euelpistus a "slave of Caesar set free by Christ." The editor(s) had clearly thought about the implications of this transformation. More than any other character a *slave* of Caesar–a dependent member of the emperor's own household–who remained steadfast against Caesar's own edict would intensify this account's call to Christian piety and resistance.[226]

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[223] Moss 2012: 92.
[224] Moss 2012: 93, 98.
[225] Although Recension B is generally more verbose, compare *Acts of Justin* A.4.1-4 and B.4.1-4. This is notable also because in other martyr acts when the accused are questioned regarding their names, places of origin, and social status, their self-identification as Christian supersedes other identity markers (Moss 2012: 93).
[226] The text is "manipulative" in this sense. To co-opt Judith Lieu, it consciously seeks to inculcate appropriate attitudes but simultaneously recognizes that its audience does not fully hold these attitudes (2004: 157). Moss notes how recension B amplifies the rhetorical force of the confessional formula "I am Christian" and this lies behind the expansion of the dialogue with Euelpistus (2012: 93).

In the world of Roman slavery a slave was considered a vicarious personality, "a faceless attendant in total subordination."[227] A central tenet of the Roman master, J. Albert Harrill explains, was the need to achieve, in a series of specific, concrete events, not just slave obedience to individual commands but also slave acceptance of the master's viewpoint so fully as to anticipate the master's wishes and to become an extension of the master's will. A slave owed absolute loyalty to the master.[228] In this worldview, moreover, a slave was one who had been fundamentally dishonored, damaged *morally* by the experience of slavery. Hence, 'slave betrayal' was a widely-used *topos* of classical culture.[229] The cultural expectation, as we have seen, was that slaves and freedpersons would show proper reverence (*pietas*/ εὐσέβεια) to their owner or patron–for imperial personnel this meant the emperor himself. In Roman slave-owning ideology this reverence was again a *moral* act, part of the 'good behavior' that showed the slave's potential for moral rehabilitation and might later lead to the reward of manumission, citizenship, and a patron-client relationship that would extend this moral education.[230]

The editor(s) of this version of the *Acts of Justin*, no less than the real audience living after Decius' edict–some of whom would have been slave-owners themselves–surely understood these subtle mores.[231] The fact that this text utilizes an imperial slave

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[227] Harrill 2003: 231.
[228] Harrill 2003: 247; Lieu 1996: 88. See the household code in Titus 2: 9-10.
[229] Harill 2003: 231-2.
[230] See discussion in Meyer 2012/13: 244-5.
[231] The fact that on several occasions Cyprian mentions dependents of the household obtaining certificates (*Ep*. 15.4; 55.13.2) points to a common theme. But the use of what seems to be a slave trope in *Ac Justin* recension B was not operative *during* the Decian period but only later.

character to define Christian piety over and against Roman piety sharpens the point all the more.[232] Euelpistus' refusal to sacrifice to the gods and yield to the emperor's edict shatters cultural expectations, ignores moral/legal obligations of slave to master, and undermines the hegemony of imperial power.[233] As for loyalty and 'good behavior' this character essentially gives his imperial master the proverbial finger. He has already been "manumitted" (ἐλευθερωθεὶς) by Christ, he says. And paradoxically it is by betraying his master and by breaking the biblical household codes that admonish slaves to obey their earthly masters that Euelpistus exhibits what this editor(s) deems proper piety.[234]

Here a slave of Caesar also pays for his defiance with his life. The text recalls Euelpistus as a martyr who died for his unwillingness to share out piety to both the emperor and Christ. Thus the Euelpistus character, who was commemorated as a martyred imperial slave, was at the center of a project that was constructing Christian identity.[235] His confession before Rusticus is as resounding as it is playful. The text could be equally be rendered: "Euelpistus answered, 'I am a slave of Caesar and I am also a Christian, freed/ manumitted by Christ, and I share in the same hope (ἐλπίς) by the favor (χάρις) of Christ.'"[236] The determinative declaration is individual as it seals his fate, but it

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[232] In recension A and B, Hierax is probably also portrayed as a slave since he says he was 'dragged off' (ἀποσπᾶσθαι) from Phrygia (*Ac. Justin* B 4.8; ἀπεσπάσθην in A 4.8).
[233] Castelli 2004: 5.
[234] Col 3:22; Eph 6:5; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet 2: 18.
[235] Memorializing martyrs' deaths was at the center of the construction of Christian identity (Lieu 2002: 211).
[236] Moss 2012: 93; Musurillo 1972: 51.

is also a public moment and a public identity.[237] For the audiences of this text, the collective memory of Euelpistus as a martyr could be shaped to continually inspire a culture of resistance, with ever new potential applications.[238]

Caesar's Christian slave was important in Christians' "martyrological grammar."[239] The thematic similarities between the *Acts of Justin and His Companions* and the *Martyrdom of Paul* are striking, for example.[240] Both present an imperial edict,[241] the belief that the "whole world" will be consumed by fire,[242] and discussions of ascending to heaven after beheading.[243] Moss rightly cautions that it is difficult to press too firmly on the connection between these two martyrdom accounts, but she is primarily referring to recension A–probably much closer chronologically to the *Martyrdom of Paul*. With recension B, however, the picture looks different. This account demonstrates an additional link to the *Martyrdom of Paul* by its use of a Christian imperial slave in martyrological discourse. And because this version most likely dates to the second half of the third century, we can be reasonably confident that recension B has an intertextual relationship with that earlier martyrdom tradition. Paul's martyrdom was, after all, exemplary.[244]

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[237] Lieu 2002: 213.
[238] Lieu 2002: 212.
[239] Moss 2012: 98.
[240] Moss 2012: 98.
[241] *Ac. Justin* B 1.1 (πρόσταγμα); *MartPaul* 2 and 3 (διάταγμα).
[242] *Ac. Justin* B 5.2 (πᾶς κόσμος); *MartPaul* 3 (ἡ οἰκουμένη ὅλη).
[243] *Ac. Justin* B 5.1(ἀποκεφαλίζειν); *MartPaul* 4 (τραχηλοκοπεῖν). Cp. Hippolytus' comments about the martyrdom of Paul (*Dan.* 2.36.4).
[244] Moss 2012: 97.

The editor(s) of recension B appropriated what seems to have been an increasingly popular 'interpretive *topos*'[245] in late-third or fourth century Christian discourse: Christians in Caesar's household. If martyrdom is a "practice of dying for god and talking about it," as Daniel Boyarin says,[246] then Christian editors, at least, were "talking" about slaves of Caesar as slaves of Christ. The text of recension B distills the martyrological motif of Christian imperial slaves for the next generation. An editor(s) continued crafting the martyrdom account and the Christian imperial slave who defied the emperor.[247] In recension C Euelpistus is polished, even poetic in his response to Rusticus: "A slave I once was of Caesar, now a slave of Christ, winning freedom by his favor."[248] This version includes a description of Mary as the "all-holy mother of God" (θεοτόκος),[249] contains a liturgical closing, and records the commemorative date of the martyrdoms as June 1.[250] It also shows more interest in the gruesome details of the scourging.[251] All this suggests that a Christian community in the fifth century was still commemorating Euelpistus as a martyred imperial slave.[252] He thus left an indelible mark in Christian commemorative narrative.

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[245] Lieu 2002: 223.
[246] Boyarin 1999: 94.
[247] The discourse changes and develops over time (Boyarin 1999: 94).
[248] Δοῦλος, ἔφη, γέγονα Καίσαρος, νυνὶ δὲ Κριστοῦ, τῇ τούτου χάριτι τῆς ἐλευθερίας τυχών) (*Ac. Justin* C.3.4).
[249] *Ac. Justin* C 2.3.
[250] *Ac. Justin* C 5.2. To this day in Eastern Orthodox traditions Euelpistus is commemorated as a saint on June 1.
[251] *Ac. Justin* C 5.1.
[252] Herbert Musurillo suggests a date about the time of the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE (1972: 57, n. 16). Also Lazzati suggested fourth-century (1956: 119) This version is preserved in the twelfth-century

BUILDING A NARRATIVE: CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD AND THE ACTS OF PETER AND PAUL

Back to the beginning. Paul and Caesar's household in the imperial capital is one of the more memorable traditions of early Christian narrative. But he was not the only apostle associated with the imperial household. The *Acts of Peter* have their own retelling. These apostolic acts focus on the exploits and martyrdom of the apostle Peter in Rome but paradoxically begin with Paul in Rome,[253] as he prepares to depart for Spain:

> A great crowd of women knelt down and fervently entreated the blessed Paul, and they kissed his feet and escorted him to the harbor (*in portum*), and with them Dionysius and Balbus from Asia, who were Roman knights (*equites Romani*) and illustrious men (*splendidi viri*). And a senator by name Demetrius kept close to Paul on his right hand and said 'Paul, I could wish to leave the city, if I were not a magistrate, so as not to leave you.' And so said some from Caesar's household (*de domo Caesaris*), Cleobius and Iphitus and Lysimachus and Aristaeus and two matrons, Berenice and Philostrate, with the presbyter Narcissus, after they had conducted him to the harbor.[254]

After this, the narrative shifts to Peter who arrives in Rome and battles the magician Simon Magus in scenes reminiscent of *Harry Potter*. At the end comes Peter's famous martyrdom in which he is crucified upside down, under the authority of the prefect Agrippa. Peter then appears to his patron and convert the Senator Marcellus, who relates

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manusript S. Sepulchri 17. The vellum fragments of the *Ac Justin* in codex Cantabrigiensis add. 4489 once formed part a martyrology for May, June and July in the early Byzantine period (Burkitt 1902: 61, 63).

[253] The relationship between the *Acts of Peter* and the *Acts of Paul* has been debated. Some have suggested the the latter used the former, so the *Acts of Peter* would have originated before c.190 CE and thus predate the *Acts of Paul*. Schneemelcher (2003 [1992]: II.283; Schmidt and Schubart 1936: 127. Schneemelcher suggests that *ActPeter* must have originated before c.190, perhaps between 180-190 CE. Others have demurred, casting serious doubt on any attempt to establish textual priority between the two. The intrelationships have not been satisfactorily resolved (Elliott 1993: 390). For bibliography and summaries see Baldwin 2005: 4-9.

[254] *ActPeter* 3. *Item de domo Caesaris Cleobius et Ifitus et Lysimahcus et Aristeus, et duae matronae Berenice et Filostrate cum praesbytero Narcisso postquam deduxerunt eum in portum.*

the vision to the other brethren. Marcellus and the brethren strengthened one another "until the coming of Paul to Rome." Thus, it would seem, ends the story. But oddly, the text then jumps to Nero who "later discovered" that Peter had died. Nero censured the prefect Agrippa because Nero had wanted to give Peter a much crueler death. For Peter, the text relates, "had made disciples of some of his [Nero's] 'servants' (lit. "hands;" πρὸς χεῖρα αὐτοῦ/ *ad manum*) and caused them to leave him."[255] Nero was incensed. But he received a vision in which a figure warns him not to persecute or destroy the servants of Christ. Alarmed, Nero kept away from the disciples from that time on.

So here we have two interpretations of a tradition about Christians within the imperial household, each relating to one of Rome's two founding apostles: Paul then Peter. But considering how these apostolic acts lionize Peter and commemorate his martyrdom the recollection of Paul and Caesar's household is particularly striking. Among other things, the recollection shows just how attached the two had become in Christian commemorative narrative. To understand more about how this text is using the tradition of Christians in Caesar's household, though, we have to come to terms with the unique challenge that the *Acts of Peter* present.

Traditions about Peter were circulating early, just as traditions about Paul were. And scholars usually suggest that the *Acts of Peter* were originally composed in Greek, in

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[255] *ActPet* 41. καὶ γάρ τινας τῶν πρὸς χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ὁ Πέτρος μαθητεῦσας ἀποστῆναι αὐτοὺς ἐποίησεν/ *Etenim Nero ad manum habebat qui crediderant in Christo, qui recesserant a latere Neronis*. Text from Lipsius and Bonnet 1959: 100-1.

Rome or in Asia Minor, and at the end of the second or beginning of the third century.[256] More acutely than other apostolic acts, however, the *Acts of Peter* lack a textual basis.[257] The search for the 'original' version of the text must be abandoned. There are some Greek fragments (and one Coptic) that date from around the fourth century,[258] but the earliest witnesses are a miscellany of excerpts and translations.[259] The earliest surviving version of any length is the *Actus Vercellenses*.[260] This is considered an "independent new version" of *Acts of Peter* that came into existence in the late fourth-century when the text was translated from Greek into Latin in North Africa or Spain.[261] Although it is clearly a translated text, it is misrepresented when treated as a literal and reliable transmission of an earlier work.[262]

For my analysis it is even more difficult to reach back to a second-century 'original.' The earliest surviving Greek witnesses of the *Acts of Peter* do not include the opening scene with Paul and Caesar's household.[263] That scene is preserved only in the later *Actus Vercellenses*. What is more, the parts of the *Acts of Peter* story that reference Paul–and by extension, Caesar's household–are also the most suspect in the *Actus Vercellenses*. The references are crowded into the first three chapters of the work, are not

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[256] Elliott 1993: 391-92; Klauck 2008: 84; Schneemelcher (2003 [1992]: II.283; Schmidt 1930: 150-5.
[257] Klauck 2008: 82.
[258] Thomas 2003: 17
[259] Thomas 2003: 10, 13, 15.
[260] Thomas 2003: 11. *Actus Vercellenses* is preserved in a sixth- or seventh-century codex (*Codex Vercellensis*).
[261] Klauck 2008: 83. For brief discussion of the text see Hilhorst 1998.
[262] Baldwin 2005: 9.
[263] To be sure, they do not include much anyway. Preserved in *P.Oxy* 849, they correspond to parts of chapters 25 and 26 in the *Actus Vercellenses* (Klauck 2008: 83).

well integrated into the text, and cause a number of discontinuities.[264] Added to this are stylist considerations. The Latin in the opening differs from the Latin in later chapters. All this suggests that the opening scene with Paul and Caesar's household was a later interpolation.[265] How late is difficult to say and depends on when one dates the first identifiable form of an *Acts of Peter*.[266] Most scholars now believe that the opening scene of Paul's departure from Rome was a third-century addition to a Greek *Acts of Peter*.[267] And since recent treatments of *Acts of Peter* have also suggested c.250 CE as the *terminus ante quem*[268] we can say that the interpolations probably date to the first quarter of the third-century or later.

More important than the precise date is the function 'Caesar's household' serves as a narrative thread in the *Actus Vercellenses*. Like that in the *Martyrdom of Paul*, Caesar's household in the *Acts of Peter*–this time with several named members instead of one– is a significant element for preserving the memory of Paul in Rome. The text also anticipates Paul's return to Rome from Spain a year later and gives every impression that those clinging to Paul as he departed–the crowd of women, illustrious men, and some

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[264] Thomas 2003: 22.

[265] Thomas 2003: 23. Thomas also notes that the the Greek version of Peter's final episode in Rome as preserved in the tenth- or eleventh-century Codex Vatopedi 79 offers additional evidence that Paul's prior sojourn in Rome and the prior Christian status of Peter's audience are later redactional elements (Thomas 2003: 26). Klauck 2008: 84; Rordorf 1998: 178-91.

[266] The earliest unambiguous evidence for the existence of a full-fledged *Acts of Peter* is in Eusebius (Klauck 2008: 82; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.3.2).

[267] Eastman 2011: 20-1, and n.13. Thomas suggests late second century (2003: 39). See also Poupon 1988: 4372-4.

[268] So Klauck 2008: 84, who also suggests a first identifiable form of *Acts of Peter* around 200 CE as still a "plausible assumption." Matthew Baldwin has even argued that "'the ancient, second-century, *Acts of Peter*,' may never have existed, per se, because the first evidence for a written *Acts of Peter* points towards a late third-century date, post-Decian (Baldwin 2005: 9, 302).

from Caesar's household–would still be there when he returned.[269] While it is clear that much of the information on Paul in the opening scene is drawn from the Pauline epistles,[270] the text also acknowledges the tradition about Paul's martyrdom at the hands of Nero.[271] The conversions in the imperial household, in fact, play the same role in both the *Martyrdom of Paul* and *Actus Vercellenses*: they anger Nero, become the indirect cause of the first persecution of Christians, and occur an apostle's martyrdom account.[272]

However, the text does not explicitly link Paul's martyrdom to his work with Caesar's household as in the *Martyrdom of Paul*. Instead, in the *Acts of Peter* the disciple-making in Nero's household is related to Peter's martyrdom. This is odd because, as Christine Thomas points out, the appearance of Nero destroys the temporal framework of the *Actus Vercellenses*, which also places Peter in Rome only twelve years after Christ's death, thus making Peter's martyrdom under Nero (54-68 CE) impossible–not to mention that nowhere else in the *Actus Vercellenses* is Nero the perpetrator in Peter's death.[273]

As for plot sequence, the linkage of Peter to the imperial palace is a head-scratcher, but the wider narrative context sheds some light. In the Vercelli codex the *Actus Vercellenses* follows the so-called Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*. Composed in

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[269] The brethren entreated Paul "not to stay away longer than a year" (*ActPet* 1).
[270] Rom 15:28; 16:21; 16: 23; Acts 28: 30-1; and Phil 4:22 (Thomas 2003: 24).
[271] A sound from heaven and a great voice breaks in to say: "Paul the servant of God it chosen for this service for the time of this life, but at the hands of Nero, that godless and wicked man, he shall be perfected before your eyes" (*ActPet* 1).
[272] Thomas 2003: 37.
[273] Thomas 2003: 22. Compare also the late-fourth century text Pseudo-Linus, *Martyrdom of Blessed Peter the Apostle* in which Agrippa is again the main culprit and Peter's martyrdom in chapters 16-17, which makes no mention of Peter making disciples in Nero's household.

Syria, this fourth-century novel, likely based on a lost Greek original from the first decades of the third century,[274] relates Clement of Rome's (i.e. the future Pope Clement I) adventures with the apostle Peter.[275] The novel is also anti-Paul in several respects.[276] The *Actus Vercellenses*, Hans-Josef Klauck stresses, must be interpreted in the context of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*.[277] The connection of Peter to the imperial household is thus understandable if the redactor of the *Actus Vercellenses* intended to interpret Peter's acts in the context of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*.

But as a thread in early Christian commemorative narrative, 'Caesar's household' plays a double role in the *Actus Vercellenses*. It allowed the redactor(s) to affirm and preserve memories of Paul's work in Rome, while simultaneously providing an auxiliary interpretation of Peter's martyrdom in Rome.[278] Indeed, it was the tradition about Christians in Caesar's household that ultimately allowed the redactor to tie together stories of the two apostles, and to help fashion the tradition that the movement's two greatest apostles were both martyred under Nero.[279]

In the following centuries references to Caesar's household continue to appear in this "master commemorative narrative." For its part, the tradition about Peter and the palace staff remains in certain Petrine trajectories. The sixth or seventh century Syriac

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[274] Bockmuehl 2010: 96; Reed 2008 4-8

[275] On the Pseudo-Clementine literature see the authoritative articles by F. Stanley Jones 1982a-b.

[276] Kelley 2006: 3; Pervo 1996: 707, more recently Pervo 2010: 177-84. See also Bockmuehl 2010: 96-7, who also describes the work as a collection of expansions on a lost novella from around the year 220 CE.

[277] Klauck 2008: 83.

[278] On the impetus for this kind of "intentional memory work" see Moreland 2016: 344 .

[279] Thomas 2003: 22, 37. The manuscripts testify to the strong relationship between the martyrdom of Peter and Paul; the idea that Peter and Paul worked in close cooperation goes back to canonical Acts of the Apostles. See Thomas 20013: 24

text *History of Shimeon Kepha Chief of the Apostles*, for example, relates that Shimeon Kepha (i.e. Peter) "multiplied the teaching in the region of Rome, and many from the household of Caesar also believed in the teaching of our Lord."[280] Notably, this text shows a dependence on the Pseudo-Clementine literature and on the lost Syrian translation of the *Acts of Peter*.[281]

On balance, however, this Petrine connection to the palace never took root in Christian commemorative narrative in the same way as Pauline connections did. The author of the *History of Shimeon Kepha Chief of the Apostles* also seems to have produced, for instance, a text called *History of the Holy Apostle My Lord Paul*. The story picks up just after Peter's martyrdom in Rome. Paul returns from Spain to Rome and makes disciples in the city, "including a great multitude from the household of Caesar."[282] And here again, in this text Caesar's household is associated with Paul's martyrdom under Nero. Likewise, Pseudo-Linus' parallel accounts of the martyrdoms of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome–which date from the late-fourth to the fifth or sixth century, respectively–only link Paul to Caesar's household, not Peter.[283]

The Pauline tradition is even more clear-cut in Pseudo-Marcellus's *Passion of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul*. Preserved as two related works in Greek and Latin from the fifth or sixth century, the story has Peter and Paul working in Rome together and

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[280] Eastman 2015: 104, 109. *Shimeon Kepha*, 29.
[281] Eastman 2015: 104.
[282] *History of the Holy Apostle My Lord Paul* 9. Eastman 2015: 195.
[283] Pseudo-Linus, *Martyrdom of the Blessed Apostle Paul* 1-2. On the dates see Eastman 2015: 28-9, and 141.

collegially, no less. Both texts were produced in Rome with an emphasis on apostolic harmony, but Peter is ultimately presented as superior to Paul.[284] Nonetheless, as both of Rome's founding apostles overtake the city with preaching so successful that it ultimately brings them before Nero, a dual tradition is evident.[285] The text relates that Peter's preaching converts innumerable people, including specifically the empress Livia, Nero's wife, and Agrippina, the wife of the prefect Agrippa. Paul's preaching, by contrast, makes converts specifically from the military (*militia*) and the palace (*palatium*), so that even the royal chamberlain (*ex cubiculo regis*) comes to Paul.[286] This tradition harkens back to the *Martyrdom of Paul* and the earliest interpretations of "Caesar's household" in Phil 4:22, and seems to have been widely transmitted through the Pseudo-Marcellus line. The text was translated into Coptic, Arabic, Old Irish, Armenian, Georgian and Old Slavonic.[287]

As they established apostolic heritages in Rome, Christian communities both competed over and shared in claims to Caesar's household. The traditions about Christians serving the emperor, particularly Nero, were indispensable themes around which the apostolic acts converge. Like we saw in the *Martyrdom of Paul*, the Petrine acts adopt and produce their own tradition as part of Christian memory and mythmaking. The popularity in Late Antiquity of the *Acts of Peter* along with its retellings ensured that

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[284] Eastman 2015: 225.
[285] On the political context of the preaching see Moss 2015 and Bremmer 1998.
[286] Ps. Marcellus, *Passion* 10.
[287] Eastman 2015: 224. The 'apocryphal' stories of Peter and Paul continued to flourish in literary and artistic representations from the fourth century. See Kessler 1987: 268-7 and van den Hoek 2013: 301-326.

whether associated with Peter or more commonly Paul in Rome, 'Caesar's household' would have a persistent place in Christian cultural narrative.

Conclusion

For many interpreters, Christians in Caesar's household in the late second- and early third-century was a simple social fact. For ancient Christian writers and communities, however, Christians in Caesar's household was also an abstraction, a symbol. Authors of this period cited Christians serving the emperor for a variety of purposes: for polemical arguments about orthodoxy and heresy, for apologies about Roman tolerance, for martyrdom accounts commemorating deaths in the face of the imperial household itself, and for narratives that secured the work and deaths of the two greatest apostles in the imperial capital. Each writing thus cultivated a tradition about Christians in Caesar's household. And each iteration of the tradition was a thread for a growing Christian cultural narrative.

Why Christian communities formulated traditions about Christians in Caesar's household as part of this narrative is the result of several converging factors. As Christians began to think about themselves as a new race and their movement as a global one they also reflected on their history and geography. This line of thought intersected with Christian collective memories about apostolic authorities and geographical heritages, especially in Rome. Rome was the presumed terminus for the praxis and powers the ancestor apostles Peter and Paul were thought to have brought from Christ himself. And Rome was thought to cradle these apostles' last vestiges.

The memory of Paul's martyrdom in Rome was a special catalyst in formulations about Caesar's household. By the time Christian writers were summoning the image of Christians serving the emperor they were simultaneously refining the story of Paul's martyrdom. From the time Paul first penned what we know as Phil 4:22, "Caesar's household" always carried the potential to be interpreted in a Roman setting at the cusp of Paul's death (Phil 1:20-6; 2:17). Now in the third-century communities associated Paul's death not only with Rome–which it seems to have been in canonical Acts and 2 Timothy–but also with Nero, with beheading, with a tomb, and then inextricably with Caesar's household. Finally, in this period there most likely were people serving the emperors who may have called themselves Christians, or who would have had various connections to Christian communities in Rome or in the provinces.

Yet, the reality of Christians in Caesar's household was never as potent the symbol. None of the writers we considered here ever claimed that the fortunes of Christianity were better because slaves or freedpersons of Caesar were Christians who were socially, economically, or politically prominent. The claims we encountered in apologies, martyrdom accounts and apostolic acts were about Christian cultural space in the Roman world and the power that could be derived from that space. The writings we surveyed contended that Christians were, and had been since the time of Paul, stationed near the center(s) of the imperial world. As such, these writings allowed Christian communities to participate in that center and recast the empire's territory as their own. So to syllogize Tertullian's declaration: If the world belongs to Caesar, and Caesar 'belongs' to Christians, then the whole world belongs to Christians.

APPENDIX OF TEXTS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

1. Martyrdom of Paul

Summary and Greek text from Eastman 2015: 121-37.

Paul arrives in Rome where Luke and Titus are waiting. Paul rents a storehouse (ὅρριον, Lat. *horreum*) outside Rome in which he teaches with the brothers and sisters. Paul became famous for his teaching. Rumor spread throughout Rome so that "a great crowd (πλῆθος πολὺ) from Caesar's household" came out to him and immediately believed in the the word. Patroclus, a certain cupbearer (οἰνοχόος) of Caesar, came to the storehouse one evening but was unable to go inside because of the crowd. He decided to sit on a high window where heared the word of god. Patroclus dozed off, fell down from the window and died. This was quickly reported to Nero by his domestic slaves (οἰκέται). Paul perceived in his spirit what had happened. He tells the brothers and sisters to go outside and bring "the youth" (παῖδα) to him. They all prayed to the Lord and Patroclus rose (ἀνέστη) and regained his breath. Then they sent him away with "the others from Caesar's household." Nero learns of Patroclus' death and is grieved. But after he returns from the bath he is informed by his servants that Patroclus is not dead but alive. Nero orders Patroclus to come to him, and there Patroclus confesses Christ. Several of Nero's courtiers–Justus the flat-footed, Orion the Cappadocian, and Hephaestus the Galatian–also confess to being soldiers of Christ. Nero promptly has them all locked up and tortured (συνέκλεισεν καὶ ἐβασάνισεν), after which he issues an edict that hunts out and kills those found to be Christians.

Paul is among those arrested. He is brought in chains before Nero and the two have an exchange in which Paul confesses that he is a soldier of the king Jesus Christ who will come one day to judge the world in righteousness. Nero then orders all those in chains to be burned with fire, but Paul to be beheaded. Many Christians are killed until a crowd of Romans gathers before the imperial palace calling upon Nero to stop the executions. The emperor relents and issues a new edict forbids burning Christians unless he first passed judgment concerning them. Meanwhile, Paul was brought to Nero again according to the second edict. "Decapitate this man," Nero orders. But Paul promises the emperor that, after his head is cut off he will appear to Nero raised (ἐγερθῆναι) from the dead to prove that he did not die but is alive in "my king Jesus Christ." On the way to his execution, Paul also preaches to his two guards Longinus and Cescus, who offer to free him in exchange for salvation. Paul refuses. Instead he tells them to come to his tomb the next day and meet Titus and Luke, who will be there praying, and they give them the seal in Christ. "After turning to the east and stretching out his hands, Paul prayed for a long time in Hebrew. He ended his prayer and shared the word with them." He said amen and stretched out his neck to be severed. Then an unnamed soldier cut off Paul's head. As Paul's head was cut off "milk spurted onto the clothes of the soldier."

The crowds that had gathered around were amazed, glorified god, and reported to Nero what had happened. While Nero is still pondering it in the presence of members of his court, Paul appears to them. He pronounces the judgment of god in retaliation for Nero's cruelty and the spilling of Christian blood. Nero was troubled and ordered that all the prisoners be set free, including Patroclus and all those remaining. At dawn the next day, when Longinus, Cescus, and those with them come to the tomb of Paul, they see Titus and Luke there with Paul praying in the midst of them. They are astounded. Titus and Luke, though, begin to flee in fear of their lives until the soldiers catch up with them and explain to these "slaves of Christ" that they want eternal life just as Paul commanded us. After they heard this Titus and Luke gave them the seal in Christ.

2. Irenaeus of Lyon, Adversus Haeresis 4.30

Latin text from Migne *PLG* vol. 7a, col. 1065.

For in some cases there follows us a small, and in others a large amount of property (*possessio*) which we have acquired from the mammon of unrighteousness. For from what source do we derive the houses in which we dwell, the garments in which we are clothed, the vessels (*vasa*) which we use, and everything else ministering to our every-day life, unless it be from those things which, when we were Gentiles, we acquired by avarice, or received them from our heathen parents, relations, or friends who unrighteously obtained them?— not to mention that even now we acquire such things when we are in the faith (*in fide*). For who is there that sells (*vendit*), and does not wish to make a profit (*lucrari vult*) from him who buys (*emit*)? Or who purchases anything (*emit*), and does not wish to obtain good value from the seller (*vendit*)? Or who is there that carries on a trade (*negotians*), and does not do so to obtain a livelihood? And as to those faithful ones who are in the royal court (*qui in regali aula sunt fideles*), do they not have the utensils they employ from the property which belongs to Caesar (*nonne ex eis quae Caesaris sunt habent utensilia*); and to those who have not, does not each one of these give according to his ability (*secundum virtutem praestat*)? The Egyptians were debtors to the [Jewish] people, not alone as to property (*res*), but as their very lives, because of the kindness of the patriarch Joseph in former times; but in what way are the gentiles (*ethnici*) debtors to us, from whom we receive both gain and profit? Whatsoever they amass with labour, these things do we make use of without labor, although we are in the faith (*in fide*).

3. 'Hippolytus of Rome,' Refutation of All Heresies, 9.12.1-13

Greek text from Marcovich 1986: 350-2.

Callistus was as a domestic slave (οἰκέτης) of a certain Carpophorus who was "faithful man from Caesar's household" (ἀνδρὸς πιστοῦ ὄντος ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας). Carpophorus

entrusted his slave Callistus with no small sum of money (χρῆμα), says Hippolytus, ordering him to bring in a profit (κέρδος) through the banking business (πραγματείας τραπεζιτικῆς). So Callistus tried his hand at a bank–literally, a money table (τράπεζαν)–at Rome's public pool (*Piscina Publica*). Under the pretext of investing with Carpophorus, the widows and brothers entrusted Callistus with their money. Straightaway Callistus swindled them (ἐξαφανίζειν), but then lost all the money. Knowing he was in for it with his master Carpophorus, who was told about the incident, Callistus fled (φυγή) the city, boarded a ready-ship at Portus, and prepared to sail for wherever the vessel was headed. Carpophorus was again informed of this somehow. He hurried to Portus and was ferried over to Callistus' ship, but before he reached it Callistus jumped into the harbor trying to drown himself. The sailors leaped into boats and fished him out. Callistus was then handed over to his master, taken to Rome, and put to work on a grinding mill (*pistrinum*).

He suffered there for a time until one day some of the brothers came to Carpophorus and begged him to release the fugitive (δραπέτης). Callistus, they cried, had indicated that he had money laid away in credit, and they also thought they were depositing their money with Carpophorus when they entrusted it to Callistus. Carpophorus was persuaded and let Callistus out. Callistus, though, having nothing to give them, unable to flee this time, and still suicidal, decided to go to a Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath where he tried to pick a fight. The Jews obliged, then dragged him before the urban prefect (ἔπαρχον τῆς πόλεως) Fuscianus. They said Callistus had disturbed them while "saying he's a Christian" (φάσκων εἶναι Χριστιανός). Yet again, Carpophorus was somehow told of the events. He sped to the bema and pled Fuscianus not to believe Callistus, for "he is not a Christian" (οὐ γάρ ἐστι Χριστιανός), Carpophorus exclaimed, but he's looking to die and made away with a lot of my money (χρήματα πολλά). The Jews thought this was all a ruse to liberate Callistus, so they clamored against Carpophorus before Fuscianus. He was persuaded, had Callistus whipped, then sent him to work the Sardinian mines.

After Callistus was in Sardinia for a while a concubine (παλλακή) of the emperor Commodus named Marcia who was a god-lover (φιλόθεος) and desired to do a good deed summoned the "blessed Victor," a bishop (ἐπίσκοπος) of the church at that time. She asked Victor what martyrs (μάρτυρες) were in Sardinia. Victor gave Marcia all the names, but did not give her Callistus' name since Victor knew what he had done. Marcia got her request from Commodus and handed over the letter of release (ἀπο-λύσιμος ἐπιστολή) to one Hyacinth who was an elderly eunuch (σπάδος ὄντος πρεσβύτερος). After receiving the letter Hyacinth sailed to Sardinia, and handed over the letter to the governor of the territory who released the martyrs, but not Callistus. Callistus then fell on his knees in tears and begged (ἱκετεύειν) that he also be released. Overcome by Callistus' importunity Hyacinth requested the governor to release him as well, saying that he had raised (θρέψας) Marcia and he guaranteed no risk would come to the governor. The governor was persuaded and released Callistus. When Callistus showed up again Victor was quite disturbed (πάνυ ἤχθετο) at what had happened, but since he was good-hearted

(εὔσπλαγχνος) he did nothing. But because people kept reproaching Callistus and Carpophorus was still sore about the whole affair, he sent Callistus to Antium allotting him a monthly allowance of food until Victor died and his successor Zephyrinus recalled him and appointed him 'over the cemetery.'

CONCLUSION

In August of 258 CE, Cyprian bishop of Carthage was in exile at Curubis, North Africa. There on his estate he awaited word about a new edict of the emperor Valerian. The emperor's previous edict of 257 CE had led to Cyprian's flight. The edict of 258, Cyprian would soon learn, will lead to harsher treatment. The rescript Valerian sent to the Senate stated that ordinary Christian bishops, presbyters and deacons should immediately be punished (*animadvertere*), but that those who were Senators, men of rank, or equestrians would also lose their dignity (*dignitas*) and have their property confiscated. If they then persisted in confessing to be Christians (*Christiani esse*) they would be executed. Matrons (*matronae*) should be deprived of their property and exiled. Moreover, "the *Caesariani*, whoever of them had either confessed before, or now confess (*confessi*), should have their property confiscated (*possessiones confiscantur*) and be sent in chains to the imperial estates (*Caesarianas*)."[1]

Cyprian preserves this information in one of his final letters. In September of that year Cyprian was escorted to the proconsul's *praetorium* in Carthage where he was arraigned. Cyprian again refused to conform to the Roman cult (*Romanam religionem*) or acknowledge Roman observances (*Romanas caeremonias*). The proconsul Galerius

[1] Cyprian, *Ep*. 80.1. Text from Migne *PL* 4, col. 429-30. These *Caesariani*, the reader will recall, have been identified as members of "Caesar's household" and later member of the *familia Caesaris* whom Paul first mentioned in the first century. See introduction and discussion below.

Maximus promptly pronounced the sentence and Cyprian was led out to a field behind the *praetorium* where he executed.[2]

Valerian's rescript of 258 is often considered a watershed moment when the "church" emerged "as a world authority and state within a state."[3] It is thought to be the beginning of the end of "Greco-Roman paganism" and, it has been suggested, the *Caesariani* helped trigger that end. In the fourth century when Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-340 CE) completed his history of the church from Christ to Constantine, he appears to claim as much. He preserves a letter ostensibly from Dionysius of Alexandria (d. 264 CE) who writes that "all [Valerian's] house had been filled with godly persons, and was a church of god (καὶ πᾶς τε ὁ οἶκος αὐτοῦ θεοσεβῶν πεπλήρωτο καὶ ἦν ἐκκλησία θεοῦ).[4] But, the letter continues, Macrianus (an imperial financial official and eventual usurper) persuaded Valerian to "get rid of them, enjoining him to slay and pursue the pure and holy men." This was the second time Eusebius had claimed an emperor's house (οἶκος) was a Christian center, and both claims anticipated Eusebius' record of persecution in the church.[5]

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[2] Summary also in Brent 2010: 20-1.
[3] Frend 1984: 325.
[4] Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* 7.10.3.
[5] In addition to the above citation in Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius recrods that when Maximinius Thrax took the throne in 235 CE "he bore ill-will towards the house (οἶκος) of Alexander, the greater part of which consisted of believers (ἐκ πλειόνων πιστῶν συνεστῶτα), and raised a persecution (διωγμός) ordering the leaders of the church alone to be put to death" (*Eccl. hist.* 6.28). Eusebius' revisionist history attempted to preserve forever a record of the steadfastness, bravery, and endurance of the champions of piety and their glorious crowns of martyrdom (Barnes 1981: 128).

Eusebius does not say who those Christians in the emperor's house were,[6] but the references show once again how the imperial "household" had become a focal point of early Christian memory and narrative.

Since Harnack it has been customary to link the *Caesariani* of Cyprian's letter with the 'church of god' whom the emperor Valerian attempted to purge from his court in 258 CE.[7] And the historiographical references to the "*Caesariani*" and the "church of god" in Valerian's "house" have often been bifocals for viewing the rise of Christianity in the empire: with them scholars can look back to distant days and forward to the near future. Many have suggested, for instance, that the *Caesariani* of the edict referred to imperial freedmen[8] or to 'civil servants.'[9] Several others have also described them as "Caesar's household,"[10] or the "vestiges" of the *familia Caesaris* from earlier centuries.[11] If this were the case it would seem that Christian *Caesariani* would not only be the descendants of earlier Christians in the *familia Caesaris*, even those saints from Caesar's household whom Paul had mentioned; but here, in the mid-third century, these Christians in "Caesar's household" would also be making the last push towards a Christian empire. "Christianity was penetrating all classes in Rome," says Frend, and "matrons and

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[6] Compare his later description of Dorotheus vis-à-vis imperial palaces and household servants (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 8.1.1-4).
[7] Harnack 1908: 2. 50-1; McKechnie 2001: 146-7.
[8] Corcoran 2015: 72; Frend 2006: 515.
[9] Frend 1984: 413 and 1982: 105. Harnack calls them both imperial freedmen who held court appointments comparable to a civil service (1908: 2.49). See also Mommsen 1899.
[10] Clarke 2005: 642-643. McKechnie 2001: 146-7. Luijendijk adopts a translation of *Caesariani* as "Caesar's household" (2008: 175). In *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1886), the editor use "Caesar's household" for as the English translation for Cyprian's reference to *Caesariani*.
[11] Corcoran 2012: 267; McKechnie 2001: 146-7.

Caesariani would play their part in the conversion of their city in the next century."[12]

Yet, it was not so. While the *Caesariani* were officials in the imperial administration a number of scholars would now suggest that by the time of Valerian and Cyprian the *Caesariani* were principally financial officials and most likely *freeborn*, of higher station.[13] This would certainly fit the overall profile of the rescript, which included senators, equestrians, and matrons. Some of the *Caesariani* may have been Christians; the edict certainly assumes this possibility.[14] But if the *Caesariani* whom the edict mentions included some Christian imperial freedmen they would not have been members of a *familia Caesaris* as it was understood in antiquity, and of course, there was no 'the' *familia Caesaris* as in a bureaucracy of all the emperor's slaves and freedmen. The *Caesariani* to which the edict refers were clearly not slaves, either, since they owned property that could be confiscated. And they were definitely not the same "Caesar's

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[12] Frend 1984: 326.

[13] Corcoran 2012: 267-8; Haensch 2006: 162-3; Weaver 1972: 26. In the late-first century the term *Caesariani* seems to be a way of denoting members of the wider imperial *familia*–not to be confused with *familia Caesaris*–some of whom could have been imperial slaves or freedpersons. Martial (c. 38-104 CE) distinguishes the previous emperor's "hated slaves"–using the archaic *famuli*–their retinues, and the superciliousness of the Palatine–reference to the imperial palace–with Domitian's *Caesarianus*. Martial uses the singular and explicitly links the *Caesarianus* with the imperial court (*aula*). In another epigram Martial uses *Caesarianus* to describe an equestrian (*Caesarianus eques*; 10.73.4). Epictetus (c. 55-135 CE) uses the Greek term Καισαριανοί. He does not describe their status, but he indicates that they were perceived to be important, even if disliked, officials. In one anecdote he described one of the Καισαριανοί as a slaver (*Diss*. 1.19.19). For the other references see *Diss* 3.24.117; 4.13.22. Originally, in the late Republic the term meant 'supporter,' 'adherent,' or 'servant' of Caesar, whether freeborn or slave and retained this wider meaning in the early empire (Weaver 2005: 251).

[14] In truth, the rescript does not claim that there *were* Christians among the *Caesariani*. It assumes that some *Caesariani could* confess to being Christians, hence the relative pronoun *quicumque*, plus the pluperfect tense (*fuerant*) and the subjunctive mood (*fuerint*). The point of focus was Christian leadership. Only secondarily does the edict include Senators, equestrians, matrons and *Cesariani*. The purpose of this secondary layer was to purge the ranks, discover who would perform the property piety of Roman *religiones*, find out who was loyal to the emperor, and seek out "whoever" (*quicumque*) had or would confess to being Christians. We have little reason to doubt that some *Caesariani* may have called themselves Christians.

household" or *familia Caesaris* to which early Christian writers, much less the apostle Paul, alluded.

Though after Valerian Roman emperors continued to own slaves, the record of imperial slaves and freedpersons had already begun to disappear at the end of the Severan dynasty. The last recorded imperial freedman is from the time of the emperor Gordian III (234-44 CE).[15] The disappearance in the historical record is due to the brevity of the ensuing reigns, the decline in epigraphic habits, and the difficulty of deciphering their imperial names.[16] There were also changes in administrative structure during the third century. The emperor's staff and especially fiscal officials, were recruited from a wider base of the population, and were less and less imperial freedmen.[17] By the fourth century, it seems to have been complete. The administration was transforming into a *militia*, and the posts held by slaves or freedmen had come to be reduced in number and importance. In the time of the emperor Licinius (308-324 CE) the *Caesariani* could no longer include freedmen.[18] Still, the emperors' slaves and freedpersons, 'Caesar's household,' and the palace lived on in Christian cultural memory long after.

In the end, then, there are three distinct stories of Christians in Caesar's household: what some scholars have told, what early Christians have told, and what imperial personnel have told. We shall summarize each in turn. In the traditional scholarly version, many have said that the emperors' slaves and freedmen helped raise

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[15] *ILS* 8851=*ILS* 8851 (Weaver 2005: 251).
[16] Weaver 1972: 25.
[17] Weaver 2005: 251.
[18] Licinius allowed the rank of equestrian to retired *Caesariani*. Corcoran 2012: 267-8.

Christianity to social, economic, or political prominence in the Roman empire. According to this version, it began with the saints from Caesar's household whom Paul mentioned in Rome, and continued for the next several centuries. But the story that older scholarship passed down has been mired in misunderstandings about who imperial slaves and freedpersons were, what they could reasonably do, and what the *familia Caesaris* was. At the same time, many methods of reading ancient texts and inscriptions have compounded the issues. Often times scholars have presumed the texts and inscriptions convey what they do not or cannot. And many have fallen victim to the triumphalist narrative that scholarship had already created at the turn of the twentieth century.

Several of these problems come to a head with treatments of Paul's letter to the Philippians. As I have shown, however, Paul wrote Philippians from Asia Minor, likely Ephesos, and the Caesar's household he mentions (Phil 4:22) was a group of the emperor's slaves–*a* particular *familia Caesaris*–who were also living in that area. This group, which would have included men and probably women, children, and additional slaves, already knew some of the Philippians, and for that reason Paul passed along greetings from them. Who exactly these saints were we do not know, but Paul's own role with them is much weaker than previously thought. As far as we can tell, he did not convert them. Their connection to the Philippians was based on shared social networks–including a cultic one–that were operative across the northeast Aegean before, during, and after Paul entered the region.

In this first-century snapshot we see a group of the emperor's slaves who could connect to a group of Christ-devotees, to the Jewish god, and/or to his divine son Christ

amid varying circumstances and with varying intensities. This aspect of the snapshot was true in Paul's day, but this particular "Caesar's household" fades with the end of Paul's letter. Attempts to connect the saints Paul mentions with names in his letter to the Romans or with names in the late-first century letter *1 Clement*, and thereby extend the cast of Christians in Caesar's household into the following generations, are futile. The only evidence we have for Christian(s) serving the emperors in Rome comes from the early third-century. Even this is fairly hazy and cannot be connected to Paul's day in any way.

The story some scholars have told was also not the same story that early Christian authors told. Even though almost everyone in antiquity thought Paul's "saints from Caesar's household" were in Rome, the ancient texts that alluded to Christians serving the emperors were focused not on rising social or political power. They were concerned more with Christian cultural history, social memory, and cultural geography. The early Christian authors' fleeting references to Christians serving the emperors in Rome and elsewhere, were wrapped up in polemics about orthodoxy and heresy, apologetics about persecution and tolerance, martyrdom accounts about resistance and death, apostolic acts about authority and ancestry. The creative and constructive act of remembering the apostle Paul's martyrdom, specifically his relationship with Caesar's household in Rome, was pivotal in this respect. So in the third century, as Christians were considering themselves as a "new race" throughout "the whole world," they cited the emperor's slaves or freedpersons to (re)claim a foothold in symbolically powerful cultural space at

the imperial center. In turn, this reclamation allowed Christians to not only create a place for themselves but to recast all the empire's territory as Christian.

The story we gather from imperial personnel themselves is different from both of those above. Those inscriptions that scholars have said are evidence for Christians in Rome's *familia Caesaris* are rather silent on the matter. The stones that the emperors' slaves and freedpersons left behind are not posthumous signs of their Christian identity, but of their commemorative practices and ritual world. Often times the story they were telling was one of grief–a lost child or spouse. Their piety was neither Christian nor pagan, but open to several interpretations that are reflective of wider Roman conventions of kinship duty (*pietas*). And as far as we know these imperial slaves and freedpersons–like their imperial slave counterparts and many people around the Mediterranean basin–continued to abide by a cosmology in which their imperial master was honored as divine. Yet, it was the Christian collective–and continually constructed–memory of Christian imperial slaves and freedpersons that ultimately won out. That memory was as indelible as any inscription carved on stone. After all, Caesar's household was already immortalized in Christian scriptures.

Despite the reality of Christian imperial slaves and freedpersons in third century Rome, the memory of Christians in Caesar's household would have floundered had not Paul, centuries before, passed on certain greetings at the end of one his letters. Because of that, Christian communities could reinterpret reality in light of Paul's letter and harken back to when the apostle to the gentiles evidently first opened the doors of the imperial palace for a new people to enter. The memory of Christians in Caesar's household would

thus live and grow as long as communities read Paul's letter to the Philippians, and/or commemorated Paul's martyrdom. And with "Caesar's household" in their cultural repertoire, Christians could reinvent themselves as a people who from the very beginning were destined, like Paul says, to "inherit the world" (Rom 4:13).

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